# Bonhams

MAGAZINE | SPRING 2024 ISSUE 78

## Chinese Art
East meets The Met

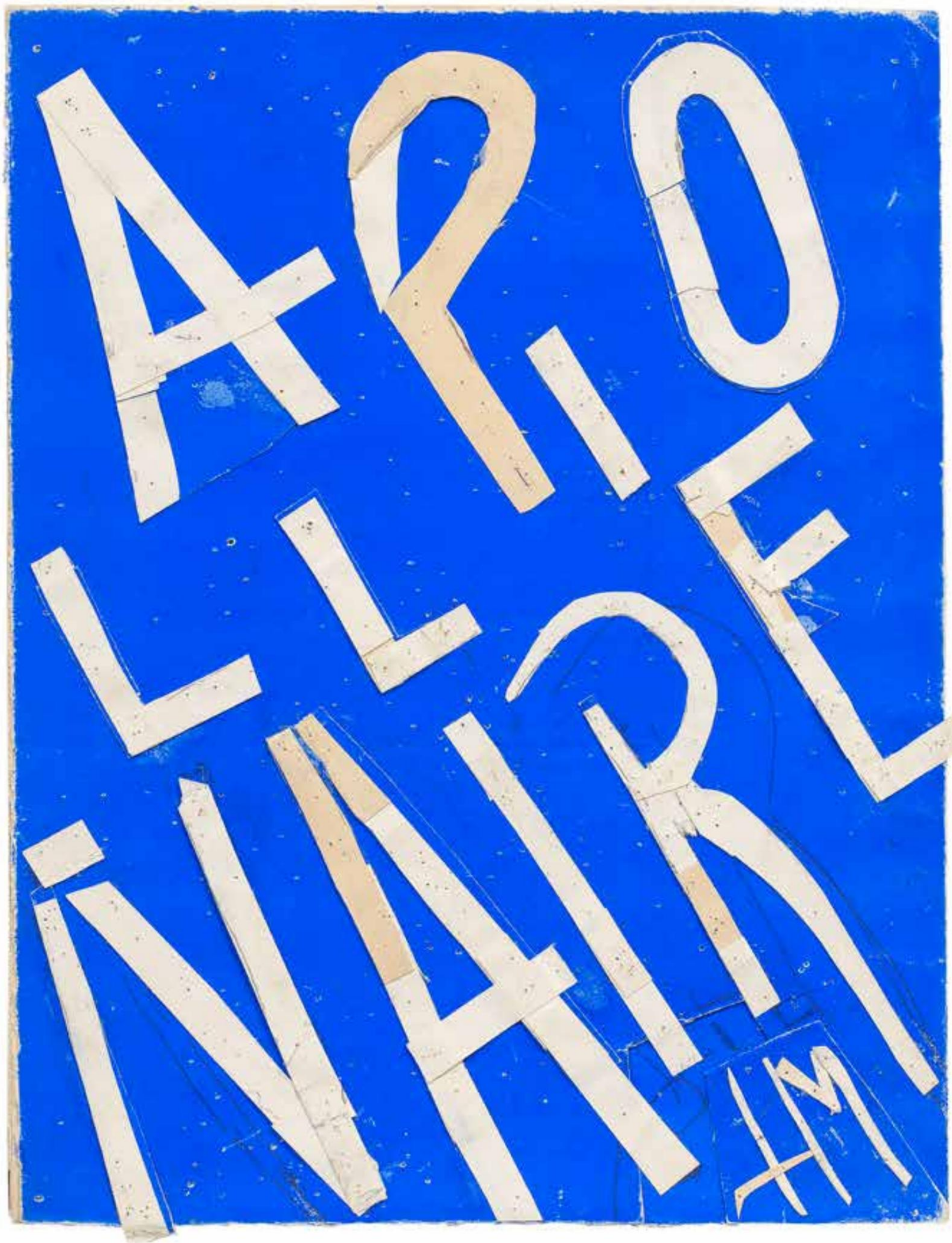
## Anselm Kiefer
Scorched earth

## Mehmed the Conqueror
Medallion man

## Daumier
Jailed for his art

and

## The Famous Napkin
The pivotal document
in the history of football?




# Impressionist and Modern Art

New York
Wednesday 15 May
2pm EDT

Henri Matisse (1869-1954)
*Apollinaire*
cut paper laid down on gouache and pencil on paper laid down on a page from *Florilège des Amours* by Pierre de Ronsard
Executed between 1951-1952
*13 x 10¼in (33.4 x 25.9cm)*
Estimate: $500,000 - 700,000
(£400,000 - 550,000)

Enquiries: Emily Wilson
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emily.wilson@bonhams.com

# The Greek Sale

Paris
Thursday 25 April
2pm

Yiannis Moralis (1916-2009)
*Eroticon*
Signed in Greek and dated “1988” (bottom centre)
oil on canvas
*166 x 115cm (65 x 45in)*
Estimate: €250,000 - 350,000
($270,000 - 380,000)

Enquiries: Julie Mathon
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julie.mathon@bonhams.com

Post-War &
Contemporary Art
London
Thursday 21 March
4pm

Frank Stella (b.1936)
*La prima spada e l'ultima scopa*
1983
synthetic polymer paint on aluminium honeycomb panels and acrylic panel
*379.7 x 346.1 x 86.4cm*
*(149½ x 136¼ x 34in)*
Estimate: £180,000 - £280,000
($230,000 - 350,000)

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**Front cover**
A detail of a massive lime-green sgraffito-ground enamelled vase with dragon handles
Qianlong/Jiaqing period
Estimate: $80,000 - 120,000

Sale: Passion and Philanthropy: Chinese Art from The Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York 18 March

# Contemporary Art + Design
Stockholm
24-25 April
From 11am

Alex Katz
*Cane Garden Bay II* (detail)
1974
oil on canvas
*122 x 152.5cm (48 x 60in)*
Estimate: 8 - 10 MSEK
($770,000 - 960,000)

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# Editor's letter



Turning points are very hard to spot without the gift of hindsight. How can one tell the difference between a false dawn and something that will gather momentum? However, there are objects that even at the time heralded a new dawn. Look no further than The Famous Napkin, which Bonhams will offer in March. On page 40, the renowned sportswriter Sid Lowe tells the story of how the 13-year-old Lionel Messi and his family were on the verge of returning to Argentina after spending a fruitless time waiting for FC Barcelona to sign him. A meeting was called between the club and Messi's agents, at which the Sporting Director of Barcelona pulled out a napkin from the dispenser on the table and began to write… Known the world over as The Famous Napkin, this flimsy piece of paper ensured the Messi family stayed, and a contract soon followed. And what a difference it made. Without Messi, would FC Barcelona (2008-2015) have become the greatest football team the world has ever seen? (Please feel free to have views and opinions.)

Another object that signalled a new era is the bronze medallion commissioned by Mehmed II – usually lauded as 'The Conqueror' – to mark his audacious seizure of Constantinople in 1453. Some years before he launched his army on the Byzantine forces, Mehmed set about refining his brand. Rather than present himself as a ruler from the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed chose to project himself – with the help of a Western artist – as a Renaissance prince, channelling the coinage of Imperial Rome. To his mind, this self-promotion in reassuringly solid metal identified him as the successor to the empire of Constantine the Great. And lo! Thirty years later, with the storming of the walls of the last outpost of the Byzantine Empire, it came to pass, and Mehmed followed Constantine as ruler of Constantinople. On page 18, Peter Frankopan writes about this extraordinary man and medal, which Bonhams is offering in May.

Now, as we swipe our smartphones, some of us think how pitiful to be born in the dark ages before iPhones arrived in 2007. But wait up! In the 2nd century AD, a new device appeared in the Roman world that conveyed all sorts of equally important information: astrology, meteorology, prophecy… I'm talking about the astrolabe. Laura Poppick explains all on page 52.

Enjoy the issue.



## Contributors





### Martin Gayford

Martin Gayford is a writer, critic and curator. He has written prolifically about art, contributing regularly to *The Daily Telegraph*, numerous art magazines and exhibition catalogues. He was art critic of *The Spectator* and *The Sunday Telegraph*, and chief art critic for *Bloomberg News*. His most recent book is *Venice: City of Pictures* (2023). On page 44, Martin writes about the extraordinary Daumier.





### Peter Frankopan

Peter Frankopan is Professor of Global History at Oxford University. His books include *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World* – a *Sunday Times* Book of the Decade (2010-20), *The New Silk Roads: The Present and the Future of the World*, and *The Earth Transformed – The Times* History Book of the Year (2023). On page 18, Peter explores the history of Mehmed II and his talismanic medal.





### Jancis Robinson

Jancis Robinson M.W. was voted the world's most influential wine critic in 2018. She has been wine correspondent for the *Financial Times* since 1990, is founder-editor of *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, and in 2000 founded JancisRobinson.com. In 1984, she was the first person outside the wine trade to pass the rigorous Master of Wine exams and in 2003 she was awarded an OBE.





### Hugo Vickers

Hugo Vickers is a biographer, and broadcaster, and an expert on the Royal Family. He has written biographies of many towering 20th-century figures, including Cecil Beaton, Vivien Leigh, the Duchess of Windsor, and the Queen Mother. His book *The Quest for Queen Mary* sold 40,000 copies in various forms. On page 56, Hugo describes his obsession with royal memorabilia.





### Laura Poppick

Laura Poppick is a science and environmental journalist based in the United States with stories that have appeared in *Scientific American*, *Smithsonian*, *Wired*, *National Geographic*, and other publications. She's currently working on *STRATA*, a book that explores four moments in deep geologic time that shaped Earth. On page 52, Laura writes about the astrolabe and its uses.

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# News

*In and out of Bonhams' salerooms*



*Georgina Brown and Major David Rankin-Hunt*



*Amy Zgraja and Claire Scott*



*Chantal Krishnadasan and Pip Torrens*



*Helena Meyer-Johann and Edward Lytton-Cobbold*



*Roger and Monty Saul*



*Nicholas and Alexandra Foulkes*



*Jack Cunningham-Nuttall*



*Sir Nicholas and Lady Coleridge*



*Meg Randell, Bernard Garby and Elin Switz*



*Leila Russack and Bianca Bowie-Phillips*



*Alexandra Shulman*



*Stephen Daldry and Andy Harries*

**Right royal time**

More than 30,000 visitors came through the doors of Bonhams New Bond Street over the course of three weeks to get a closer look at the exceptionally crafted props and costumes from the Netflix series *The Crown*. Four floors of the London saleroom were filled wall-to-wall with objects big and small – from a full-scale replica of the Gold State Coach and a nearly 4m-high reconstruction of the façade of 10 Downing Street to the gown inspired by Princess Diana's 'Revenge Dress' and a replica of her blue engagement ring. The excitement continued to build as the sale date drew closer: 300 guests attended the final after-hours party – among them Andy Harries, founder of Left Bank Pictures, which produced the series; *The Crown* director Stephen Daldry; Jack Cunningham-Nuttall, who appears in Season 6; and journalists Nicholas Foulkes and Alexandra Shulman. A week later, on 7 February, all 161 lots sold in the live auction, followed by all 312 lots in the online auction the next day, bringing the sales to a triumphant finale having raised more than £1.6 million.

Chopard

ALPINE EAGLE

# Modern & Contemporary African Art

London
Wednesday 27 March
3pm

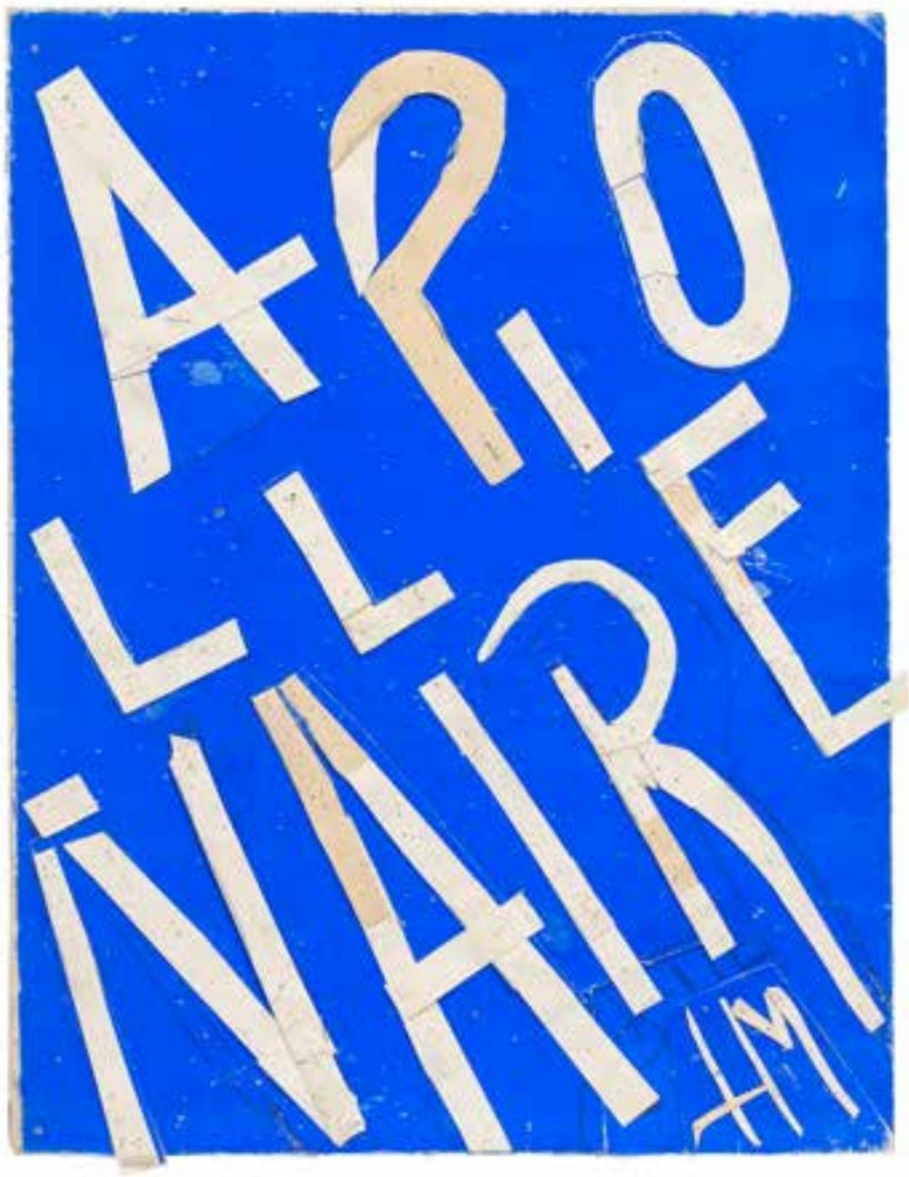
Benedict Chukwukadibia Enwonwu M.B.E (Nigerian, 1917-1994)
*Portrait of Tonkin Jackson* (detail)
signed and dated 'BEN ENWONWU/ 1982' (lower left)
oil on canvas
*75 x 49.5cm (29½ x 19½in)*
Estimate: £300,000 - 500,000
($380,000 - 630,000)

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### ✯ Chaplin's last laugh

Corsier-sur-Vevey on the Swiss Riviera is probably as far removed from Hollywood as a town can be, with its peaceful views of Lake Geneva and the Alps, its tranquillity and its privacy. It is little wonder, then, that Charlie Chaplin chose to settle there with his young family in 1952 – following a decade of controversies in the United States surrounding his work, personal life and politics. He retreated to Manoir de Ban, a 19-room neoclassical mansion where he worked on his late films, music scores and autobiography until his death in 1977. Today, the estate is a house museum dedicated to Chaplin, retaining furniture and artefacts treasured by him and his family. This May, Bonhams will offer a pair of life-size Japanese 19th-century bronze sculptures of geese from Manoir de Ban in the Japanese Art auction in London, with two paintings from the actor's collection to be offered later this year.

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### ✯ Friend or foe?

In 1910, Henri Matisse exhibited two paintings at the Salon d'Automne to a chilly response from critics. "Everyone hated *La Danse* and *La Musique*," he later confided in a letter. "Only one person stood up for me." That was poet and art critic Guillaume Apollinaire, who praised Matisse's paintings as his best to date. Matisse was unmoved. "As he disgusts me, I'd rather have an enemy," he stated. Matisse and Apollinaire probably met four years earlier, and Apollinaire remained unwavering in his support of Matisse's art, frequently defending him against criticism. The relationship was more complicated for Matisse: Apollinaire was also a friend and ally of Picasso – Matisse's life-long rival. The animosity dissolved after Apollinaire's death in 1918: by 1952, Matisse was designing the slipcase for the book *Apollinaire* – a tribute to the poet by their mutual friend André Rouveyre – using his signature cut-out technique. A rare *Apollinaire* slipcase will feature in Bonhams' Impressionist & Modern Art sale in New York in May.

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### ✯ Lotus blooms

The police will be too busy tucking into their festive dinner to catch a Formula One car speeding at 120mph. So *Motor Sport* journalist Denis Jenkinson told himself as he rocketed along the rural roads of Hampshire in a Lotus 12 racing car on Christmas Day 1957. Colin Chapman – founder of Lotus Cars had met Jenkinson at a pub with the Lotus 12 on a trailer. This ultra-lightweight racing car was the first Lotus single-seater design. Built originally for Formula 2 in 1957, this actual Type 12 – Chassis 353 – would be upgraded in 1958 to become the first-ever Team Lotus Formula 1 car – and it was driven by Graham Hill. This historic landmark car will be offered by Bonhams at Les Grandes Marques à Monaco, (estimate: €290,000 - 390,000) where Graham Hill went on to win no fewer than five times. Back in 1957, Denis Jenkinson's illicit drive proved to him that the Lotus 12 was "a revelation on the open road."

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*Clockwise from above: Charlie Condou and Peter Horbye; Janet Hardie, Sir Grayson Perry and Richard Ansett; Michael Moszynski and Joanna McDwyer; Ruth Sack and Stephen Phipps; Myra Stimson and Meg Rosoff; Leonie Grainger and Leontine Hall*

### ✯ Pottery class

"Grayson is incredibly difficult to work with and is a complete diva. He's actually lovely, obvs," begins *MUSE: A Portrait of Grayson Perry* by portrait photographer Richard Ansett – a celebration of their decade-long friendship. Shortly after the publication of *MUSE* last October, Ansett and Perry sat down at Bonhams New Bond Street for an exclusive conversation about the book, after which there was an opportunity to buy a limited edition copy signed by both Perry and Ansett. Guests included writer Meg Rosoff and actor and LGBT rights activist Charlie Condou.















**Asia Week New York**

Asia Week New York kicks off its ten-sale series on 18 March with two spectacular collections. The first, dedicated to the archaistic jades and Qing ceramics of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is explored in more detail on p.28. The second is part two of the Alan and Simone Hartman Collection, offered as part of the **Chinese Ceramics and Works of Art** sale. Gallerist Alan Hartman bought his first piece of jade at the age of 12, building his illustrious collection with his wife Simone for over half a century. Last December, more than 100 pieces of the Hartman Collection of fine art and Asian art were sold for $22 million. March's offering includes a wide range of objects spanning the Shang to Qing dynasties, including an archaic ritual bronze wine vessel (estimate: $25,000-45,000). Beyond the Hartman Collection, look out for a rare cloisonné enamel circular box and cover (estimate: $100,000-150,000) and a blue and white Qianglong *bianhu*, a type of flask (estimate: $30,000-50,000).

From the early 18th century onwards, snuff bottles in China were transformed from storage for tobacco to decorative works of art and status symbols. The **Fine Chinese Snuff Bottles from a Private Collection** sale on 19 March offers a rare opaque green 'Scholars in a Landscape' bottle (estimate: $15,000-20,000).

Meanwhile, highlights from the **Classical and Modern Chinese Paintings** sale, also on 19 March, range from the 10th- to 11th-century painting *Travelers in Autumn Mountains* (estimate: $60,000-90,000), attributed to Yan Wengui, to 20th-century artist Qi Baishi's scene *The Immortal Li Tieguai Drinking from a Gourd* (estimate: $50,000-75,000).

There is also an outstanding single-owner collection offered on 20 March. This spans 800 years of Buddhist figures, sculptures and paintings – including one of the largest and most important Tibetan portrait *thangkas* depicting the Lama Chennga Tsültrim Bar (estimate: $600,000-800,000), a copper-alloy portrait of the great Nepalese abbot Lowo Khenchen Sonam Lundrup (estimate: $400,000-600,000) and a 14th-century *thangka* of Akshobya, one of the Five Great Buddhas, which has been preserved in excellent condition (estimate: $60,000-80,000).

More Buddhist works are offered in the various-owner **Indian, Himalayan & Southeast Asian Art** sale itself, including a grey schist relief with the Teaching Buddha (estimate: $500,000-700,000). Two online auctions will also run 15-24 March: Arts of India, Southeast Asia & the Himalayas Online and a sale dedicated to Indian Paintings including



selections from the Conley Harris Collection.

Coming full circle, Asia Week rounds off with notable collectors: the **Japanese and Korean Art** sale on 21 March features a selection of screens from the Metropolitan Museum of Art – with one highlight being *Moon over Mount Yoshino* (estimate: $6,000-9,000) – as well as a gold *chagama* (ceremonial tea kettle) from the Alan and Simone Hartman Collection (estimate: $10,000-15,000).

The **Joseph and Elena Kurstin Collection of Inro** sale, on the same day, presents 55 decorative *inro* containers. Traditionally worn on the waist, *inro* are now considered works of art in their own right for their materials and the skill of their decorative schemes, as seen in the collection's Chinese sailing vessel (estimate: $30,000-40,000) or a fantastical box of goblins (estimate: $15,000-25,000). Last December, the Kurstins' unrivalled collection of Japanese netsuke achieved a total of $1.9 million and set a world record price for a single netsuke at $441,300.

*Bonhams Asia Week New York sales run from 15 to 24 March at the Madison Avenue saleroom.*

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*Edward Wilkinson*
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# Prints & Multiples

Tuesday 26 March

10am

Los Angeles

David Hockney (born 1937)
*Lithographic Water Made of Lines and Crayon*, 1978-80
Lithograph in colors
*29 x 34in (73.7 x 86.4cm)*
Estimate: $80,000 - 120,000
(£65,000 - 95,000)

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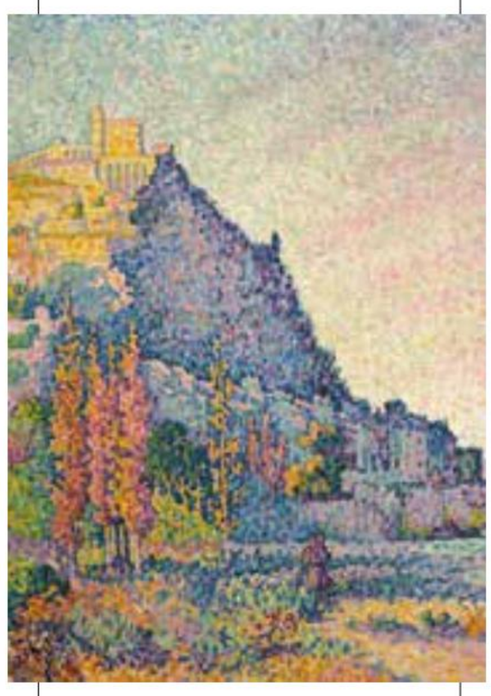


### ✯ Matisse among the Moomins

In 1938 – seven years before she published her first *Moomin* story – Tove Jansson left Finland to study painting. Her domineering tutor in Paris assigned them antiquated subjects such as 'Moses strikes the rock'. She quit after two weeks. Jansson then studied with a forward-thinking Swiss artist and found herself drawn to the colourful works of Matisse and Suzanne Valadon. "Here is Paris, you can't be afraid of colour, it sparkles everywhere," she wrote to her mother. Back in Finland, she continued to paint in vibrant colours, and a still life from 1939 – whose blue dog-like creature foreshadows her later fantastical characters – will feature in Bruun Rasmussen's March auction, dedicated to pioneering women artists.

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## What happened next...



### Hartman of gold

The inaugural sale of The Alan and Simone Hartman Collection of Impressionist works and Asian art achieved more than $22 million in December at Bonhams New York.



### Crowning glory

Across a live auction in London and an online sale, all 473 lots from *The Crown* sold for a total of £1.67 million, soaring above the pre-sale estimate of £525,000.

### On the cuff

The exceptionally rare 1930s Verdura for Chanel 'Maltese cross' cuff sold for $432,300 at the New York Jewels auction in December.



### ✯ Irish ays

Dublin's City Assembly House was the first purpose-built public exhibition gallery in Ireland and Britain when it opened in 1771. It was built out of a desire to promote the work of Irish artists and to serve as an academy for the arts. What location, then, could be more fitting for a viewing of highlights from The Irish Sale: Vision & Voice? This celebration of Irish art, culture and history was Bonhams' first auction on the island of Ireland. Four days after having launched the exhibition with a drinks reception, the auction was led by a view of Killary Bay by Irish landscape painter Paul Henry (1876-1958) that achieved more than €140,000.


*Séamus Moran and Jeremy ó Sullivan*


*Victoria Browne and Hannah Baker*


*Marcus Casey and Marie-Louise Martin*


*Patrina and Raymond Hurley*





### ✯ South African adventure

More than two decades ago, in 2002, Deon Viljoen published comprehensive exhibition catalogues on South African art for London's Goodman Gallery and for the Irma Stern Museum in Cape Town. This year, at Bonhams New Bond Street from 23 to 27 March, the author and curator will bring to light South African masterpieces from The Atholl Collection of South African Art. On view alongside the Modern & Contemporary African Art sale, the collection – which includes some of the most-celebrated names in African art, including Irma Stern, William Kentridge, Gerard Sekoto and Anton van Wouw – will have its own dedicated exhibition in the ground-floor saleroom.

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19th Century and British Impressionist Art
London
Wednesday 20 March
2pm

Vasilii Dmitrievich Polenov (1844-1927)
'*And she went and told them that she had been with Him as they mourned and wept*' (detail)
signed in Cyrillic (lower right)
oil on canvas
*106.7 x 177.2cm (42 x 69¾in)*
Estimate: £400,000 - 600,000
($500,000 - 760,000)

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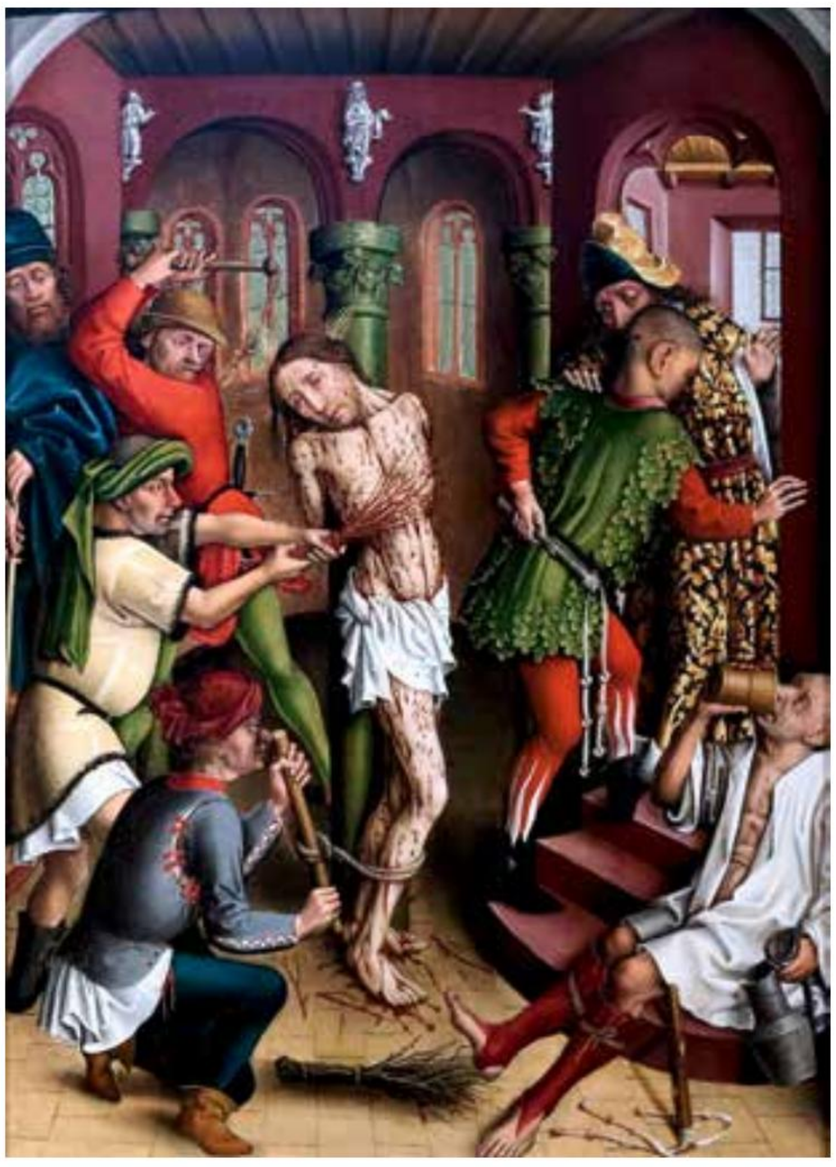
# French connections

*Lucinda Bredin* talks to Arnaud Cornette de Saint Cyr about having auctions in his blood


© Fabrice Gousset

**Right**
Arnaud Cornette de Saint Cyr, Chief Executive Officer of Bonhams Cornette de Saint Cyr

**Below**
*The Disrobing of Christ* from the Karlsruhe Passion, *c*.1440



The auction world is full of fables of unexpected triumphs and hair-raising near misses. Arnaud Cornette de Saint Cyr has stories of both – and everything in between. Last year was an *annus mirabilis*, with a selection of the fabulous art collection – not least works by Dufy, Géricault, Delacroix and Millet – belonging to the legendary French actor Alain Delon. The saleroom was so packed, the auction had to be relayed to another gallery to accommodate all the expectant bidders. Not surprisingly, the auction – '60 Years of Passion', which took place a year after Bonhams had acquired Cornette de Saint Cyr – achieved more than €8m, double its pre-sale estimate.

Alain Delon had a long-established connection with Arnaud's father, Pierre. As Arnaud says, "They had been friends for more than 60 years, which began through them collecting Old Master drawings. He and my father were, at that time, among the very few who were interested in this field, so that created the bond between them. Alain was part of our family." During a sale of his works in 2007, the actor bestowed a gavel on Arnaud, who was on the rostrum. "It had been given to Alain by my father. It was so moving, I was on the verge of tears."

Having been born into a family of auctioneers, was Arnaud going to do anything else? "Well, I was a banker at first. I went to business school and then into private banking in Hong Kong for three years. But after a couple of years I was experiencing Sunday evening trauma… when the weekend is over and you have to go back to work. I realised the banking industry was not for me. So I decided to return to France, become an auctioneer and go into the family business. I mean, we're not going to go into deep psychoanalysis, but it did make my father very happy."

His father, Pierre, began Cornette de Saint Cyr in the 1970s. But this was a new departure for the family. As Arnaud puts it, "My grandfather was a surgeon with a clinic in Morocco, which was where my father was brought up. One day, my father went to an antique shop and bought an Old Master drawing to give to a friend as a wedding present. However, he liked it so much, he kept it, and his passion grew from that."

Cornette de Saint Cyr became known for auctions of celebrities, of actors, of people from the world of fashion.






**Left**
Raoul Dufy (1877-1953)
*La baie de Sainte Adresse*, 1906
Sold for €1,016,000

**Above**
Pierre Cornette de Saint Cyr, founder of the eponymous Parisian auction house

"My father had many friends in show business. He was married to an actress, and it was his natural environment. But he was an innovator as well: he had the first sales of comics and photography, for example."

Cornette de Saint Cyr became known for selling Impressionist, Modern and Contemporary works – they hit a rich seam of works by Degas – but the single lot that stays in Arnaud's mind was an Old Master painting. "We had a phone call one day from somebody who was the former history teacher of one of my uncles in Morocco, so quite remote. He said, 'Well, we have some family paintings, can I send you some pictures?' They looked interesting, so my father visits the family. They were in Périgueux in the centre of France, in a small, small house. And there was nothing, it was just like one white leather sofa, a big TV and that painting. My brother looks at it and the panel is fantastic – oak panel, not reproduction.

"The painting comes back to Paris, and we show it to our expert. Two days later, he calls and says, 'Jackpot!'"

The painting comes back to Paris, and we show it to our expert. Two days later, he calls and says, "Jackpot!" It was by the Master of Karlsruhe and we sold it for €5m.

After 2000, Cornette de Saint Cyr decided to focus on Modern and Contemporary works, partly because Pierre "was very much involved in the art scene. He was the head of the Palais de Tokyo. He was very close to all the artists of his generation: César, Arman, Combas... I knew them all when I was growing up. Arman was quite silent. Combas was really close to him. César, on the other hand, was very funny. He would tell all these funny stories, and he was really, really nice. Every single morning my father and he would talk on the phone. It was more than friendship." Arnaud points to a portrait of his father that César painted which hung in his office – it is now where Arnaud sits.

The house of Cornette de Saint Cyr moved to its current headquarters in Avenue Hoche in 2013. "It was a big step for us," Arnaud confirms. "The competition in Paris was really raising its game to international standards, and we realised we had to step up." The building – a 19th-century *hôtel particulier* a few minutes' walk from Parc Monceau – is full of *fin-de-siècle* flourishes, with high ceilings, a spectacular stone and wrought-iron staircase, and large windows overlooking Avenue Hoche itself. It is a wonderful place to display art and collectibles, says Arnaud.

In June 2022, Bonhams announced that it had acquired Cornette de Saint Cyr. How did Arnaud and his family feel about joining the Bonhams Network? "It has been said before that to be an international auction house, you had to be established in England in the late 18th century. And Cornette de Saint Cyr was not. So it was extremely hard to build an international brand. We are well known in France and Europe, a bit in New York, but we needed to boost our presence in Asia. So the obvious candidate was Bonhams. When we began talks with Bonhams, it was obvious that it was absolutely the right move to make at the right time."

And what has Bonhams brought to CSC? "Oh, a lot. The standards, the logistics, but above all the network. Network in terms of geography, network in terms of human resources, network in terms of expertise. It's massive! I mean when you have a painting, you can talk to five, six, seven, eight people who are knowledgeable, and you can share your views on the painting, on the estimate, and then you can rely on all the network for the sourcing and then for the selling. It's a huge, huge, huge asset, and it's something that our clients now demand. It's not just a pitching pirouette. It is true – and something that we couldn't do before."

*Lucinda Bredin is Editor of* Bonhams Magazine.

# Fine Art
## Copenhagen
## Monday 4 March
## 5pm

C.W. Eckersberg
*"Den nordøstlige side af Capitol"*
*(The Northeast Side of the Capitoline Hill)* (detail)
oil on canvas
*32 x 48cm (12½ x 19in)*
Estimate: DKK 3–4 million
(€400,000 - 535,000)

Enquiries: Julie Arendse Voss
+45 8818 1123
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# Facing the world

Mehmed II was the conquerer who seized Constantinople from Christendom. And he had a profile to match, says ***Peter Frankopan*** as shown by a portrait being offered at Bonhams

**Left**
The siege of Constantinople, as depicted by Jean le Tavernier *c.*1455

**Opposite**
A rediscovered portrait medallion of Sultan Mehmed II (1432-1481) 15th century
Estimate: £1,500,000 - 2,000,000 ($2,000,000 - 2,500,000)

The Ottoman empire was a mighty realm. At its peak, it reached from Central Europe to Egypt and the Red Sea, encompassing much of the Middle East, not least a large chunk of the Arabian peninsula. And, in the person of Mehmed II, the empire found perhaps the greatest of all its sultans.

Born in 1432, he was the empire's seventh ruler, following its foundation in 1299 by Osman, an elusive leader of whom little is known. Although Mehmed was not responsible for all of those territorial gains, he oversaw a major expansion of the lands and peoples that fell under the sway of the Ottomans, almost trebling the size of the empire during his reign. Mehmed was most famous, however, for one specific achievement – for which he gained the epithet 'the Conqueror' (or Fatih in Turkish): the capture of Constantinople in 1453.

The fall of the city, which had been the subject of lavish investment by the Roman Emperor Constantine and had stood for more than a millennium as the capital of the Roman empire in the east (usually called the Byzantine empire) sent shockwaves through the Mediterranean and beyond. According to Nicholas V, the Pope at the time, Mehmed was none other than "the son of Satan, perdition and death". Constantinople had been heavily defended, protected by walls that were thought to be all but impregnable; it had also been the largest Christian city in Europe for many centuries.

"According to the Pope, Mehmed was none other than 'the son of Satan, perdition and death'"

Constantinople's fall to Mehmed and his forces was not so much a dramatic moment as a decisive turning point in history. According to the British historian Lord Acton, "modern history begins under the stress of the Ottoman conquest". The failure of Europeans to put their differences to one side, the reluctance of Christians in the west to support their Greek-speaking Orthodox neighbours to the east, and the ineffective response to the threat posed by


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**Above**
Costanzo da Ferrara (*c*.1450-1524)
*Mehmed II, Sultan of the Turks*, *c*.1477



**Right**
A map of Istanbul following the death of Mehmed II, created by Matrakçı Nasuh in 1537

Mehmed and his Muslim armies set off a chain reaction that, according to Acton, ultimately helped shape the Reformation – if not the age of global empires that emerged from places such as Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and Britain.

For scholars like Acton, the significance of the capture of Constantinople spoke of fractures in Europe, of political cowardice and military ineptitude. From a wider perspective, however, the conquest was one that spoke of tactical brilliance on Mehmed's part and represented the importance of problem-solving and of decision-making. Furthermore, while much attention has been expended on the fate of Constantinople, in the long run, it was Mehmed's reinvigoration of the city that was to prove compelling and to have long-lasting effects – the most significant of which was a new wave of urban development and expansion that turned Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) not only into the capital of the Ottoman empire, but into a global city once again.

Few would have bet on Mehmed, if reports of his upbringing are to be believed. A lazy boy, he had apparently needed a stern hand to force him to study and to memorise verses of the Qu'rān, Islam's holy book. We know that he was interested in art and was creative, for (remarkably) we have pictures he made as a young man that show no little talent. These interests persisted after he became sultan, first as a teenager after his father stood down in his favour, and then after he assumed sole rule once again in 1451. Mehmed was a prodigious patron of the arts, repeatedly seeking out artists from Venice, Florence and beyond to offer them commissions.

His interests extended to sciences too, both in terms of the pursuit of pure knowledge, but also for the benefits that it could offer. Mehmed was an avid student of ballistics and artillery, and paid considerable attention to investing in metals that cooled quickly – thereby enabling his cannons to reload more quickly than those of his opponents, and

"The most famous cannon, named 'Basilica', could fire even larger projectiles over a distance of a mile"

therefore offer battlefield advantage. Indeed, his use of cannon was crucial in 1453, with the massive walls of Constantinople badly damaged by repeated firing of cannonballs that weighed as much as 500kg – opening up breaches in the defences in the process. The most famous cannon, named 'Basilica', could fire even larger projectiles over a distance of a mile.

Mehmed's use of these technologies were crucial in conquering the city; but they came to be hugely




# Medallion man

## Precarious on the sultan's throne, young Mehmed II forged an enduring link between him and Constantine the Great

This circular bronze portrait relief, to be offered by Bonhams in the Islamic and Indian Art Sale in London this May, was only rediscovered some 20 years ago, and is a remarkable portrait of probably the greatest of the Ottoman sultans. Even for an empire that spanned from the very end of the 13th century until a few years after the end of the First World War, and which extended for more than 2 million square miles, Mehmed II was exceptional. Generally referred to as Mehmed the Conqueror – a title gained after he stormed Constantinople in 1453, to the chagrin of Christian Europe – Mehmed was known for commissioning portraits of himself at various points of his life, the best-known being one by the Venetian artist Gentile Bellini (*see overleaf*) that is now in the National Gallery in London.

Prior to his accession as sultan in 1451, Mehmed was an emir of Manisa in Western Anatolia, sent there to learn the rudiments of political power. At this time, succession could be easily derailed by civil war or the appearance of a pretenders to the Ottoman throne. Indeed, his father, Murad II, had abdicated in favour of his then 12-year-old son in 1444, but then returned to the throne only two years later to put down a revolt by the Janissaries (the sultan's household guards). It would not be until Murad's death in 1451 that Mehmed finally took a firm grip on the empire.

It is little wonder, then, that Mehmed took such great pains to define his own position, using whatever means came to his attention – including a variety of fashionable artistic representations. Indeed, it was probably during this time of unrest, while he was at Manisa or shortly after his father's death, that he commissioned this particular bronze portrait.

Emerging from studios in Italy in the late 1430s, this type of Renaissance medal provided the nobility with a sense of identity, a form of self-promotion cast in reassuringly solid metal.

The stylistic characteristics of Mehmed's medallion are in keeping with those of his Italian contemporaries. It was clearly modelled by a skilled Western artist, though one whose identity is yet to be confirmed. The absence of any design or lettering on the reverse ensures the viewer's focus is all on the portrait itself, while the neat piercing above Mehmed's profile indicates its function as a personal talisman, to be hung around the neck.

With stylistic roots in the coinage of imperial Rome, the medallic portrait provided Mehmed with a visceral sense of his own imperial legitimacy, identifying him as the successor to the empire of Constantine the Great. This was in accord with a broader Ottoman vision: the dynasty referred to the south-eastern provinces as Rumeli or Rum – a Turkish reference to Rome.

It is nonetheless fascinating that, as the Ottoman historian Marc David Baer has observed, Mehmed should have chosen – amid all the political uncertainties of his teenage years at Manisa, at a critical period in his ascendance – to define and cultivate in this specific way an "awareness of his connection to the Roman legacy".

Portraying him as the natural successor to the empire of Constantine the Great, this medallic portrait enabled Mehmed to project the self-image that bore fruit on 29 May 1453 at the gates of Constantinople. Beyond the symbolic relevance of such an object is the practical purpose to which it might have been put, some sense of which is outlined in Roger Crowley's biography of that epic campaign, which suggests that the young sultan's preparations for the siege of Constantinople are likely to have included the "donning of a talismanic shirt, richly embroidered with verses from the Qu'rān and the names of God".

The proliferation of such garments, many of which today line the walls of museums, give this idea credence, particularly for an event of such significance to Mehmed himself. A further sense of that culture is conveyed by his portrait on a later medal, which clearly shows him wearing the medal round his neck.

While the permanence of the bronze from which this extraordinary medallion was made ensured its survival over subsequent centuries, the absence of any text or iconographic detail on the reverse – unnecessary to its function as a talisman – helped obscure the artefact's remarkable backstory. It is likely to have remained at the Ottoman court during Mehmed's lifetime, with its subsequent departure following his death thought to have occurred in much the same circumstances as those of the Bellini oil painting.

That Bellini portrait shows an elderly Mehmed, providing a moment of a sober reflection on a dramatic life, over which the shadow of Constantine the Great and his capital of Constantinople had loomed large.

Thirty years earlier, Mehmed was about to embark on that extraordinary journey to become conqueror of Constantinople. But another Western artist, yet to be identified, had already codified in cast-bronze relief Mehmet's embryonic vision of himself as the Last Roman Emperor.



**Above**
James Webb's 1873 painting of Constantinople. The conquest of the city marked 'a decisive turning point in history', says Peter Frankopan

**Right**
One of the many depictions of Mehmed II, this oil painting – held by the National Gallery in London – was completed by Gentile Bellini around 1480

significant in the military campaigns in the 30 years or so that followed. These saw Ottoman expansion deep into Asia Minor, as well as ever further into South-east and Central Europe, into the Black Sea and even, at the time of his death, a foothold in Italy following the capture of Otranto in 1480. Mehmed's expeditions were not uniformly successful, but they earned him a fearsome reputation. He was feared across Europe, where he was referred to as a "venomous dragon" at the head of "bloodthirsty hordes", and – by the end of his reign – as "the present Terrour of the world".

Beyond all the hyperbole, Mehmed was indeed a remarkable man. The conquest of Constantinople was accompanied by a set of policies that even critics conceded showed a surprising degree of tolerance, most notably to the Greek Orthodox Christians who were protected from persecution by laws as well as by the sultan's personal command – with similar concessions being given to Armenian Christians, to Jews and to other minorities in the city. Some voices at the time (and today) ascribe policies such as these – which find echoes in multiple other regions and cases – to necessity rather than to enlightenment. They note that while Mehmed developed a close and respectful working relationship with the Patriarch Gennadius II, the sultan turned the magnificent church of Hagia Sophia into a mosque and, less than a decade later, tore down the Church of the Holy Apostles in order to build the massive Fatih mosque on its site.

Yet Mehmed's convictions seem to have been driven by genuine interest and enlightened thinking that were unusual at the time. Few other rulers in Europe were as keenly interested in expanding their learning to find out about other cultures and histories, or in building up libraries of manuscripts in multiple languages, as Mehmed did. It is true that the Ottoman sultan stood to benefit from reading texts like Herodotus and Livy, or by seeking to visit the tombs of Ajax and Achilles when he travelled to the plain of Ilium, home to the fabled city of Troy: after all, mirroring the achievements of great heroes of the past helped show off his own glories, while identifying some of the best known figures from history as his models was a useful way to project himself.

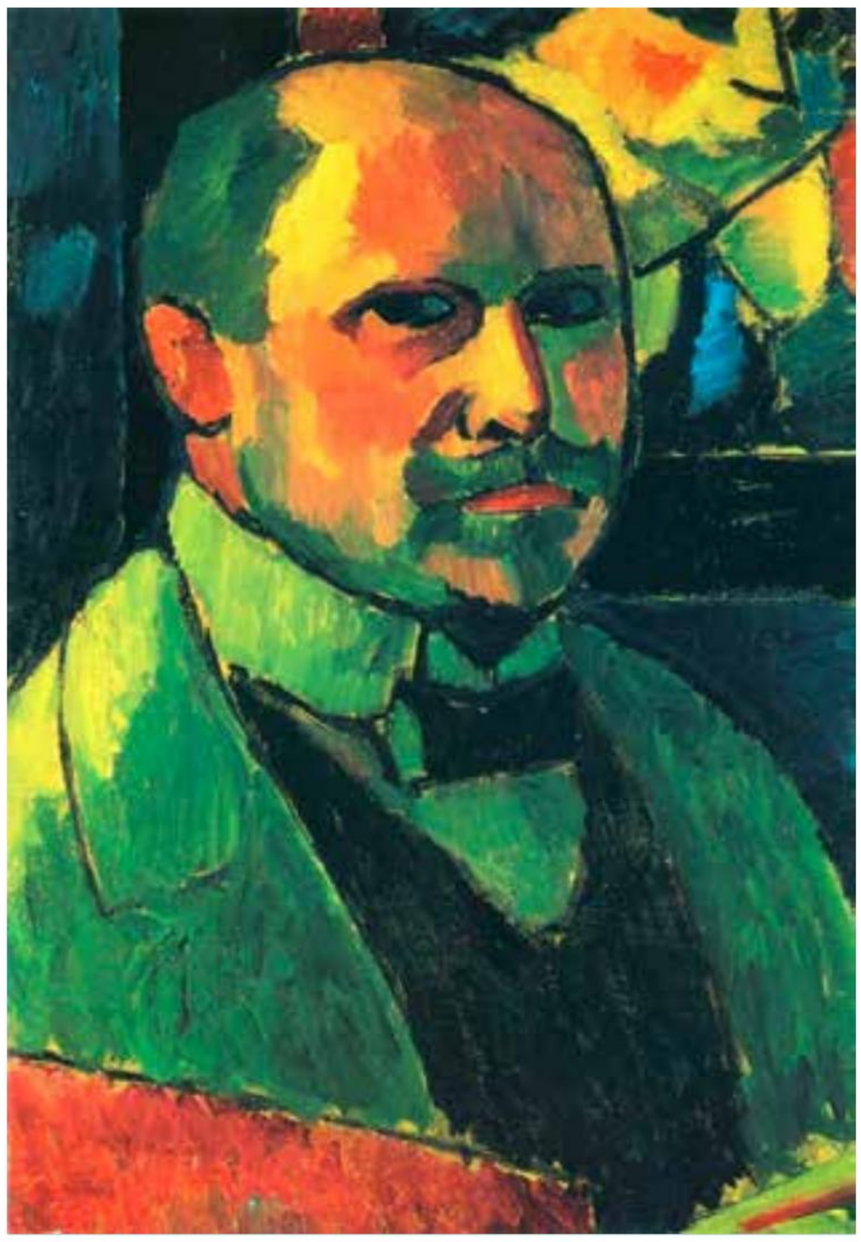
And Mehmed was keenly aware of that image. He repeatedly sought artists from Italy to paint his portrait and create sculptures of his likeness – far more than any of his peers in Europe. That may have been because he wanted to admire his own likeness; but having portraits of a great conqueror, styled in ways that could be understood by his new and potential future subjects and allies was important too.

Mehmed II was, in other words, not only a conqueror but a complex and fascinating ruler. For his enemies, he was a fearful figure whose success foretold the Apocalypse; for others, he was a patron, an intellectual and a model master, who was willing to promote on merit, to ask questions and to listen to advice. That is what we can see when we look at this talismanic portrait – a paragon of a man who commanded respect from his followers. And, of course, one of the great figures of history.

*Peter Frankopan's most recent book is* The Earth Transformed *(2023).*

Sale: Indian and Islamic Art
New Bond Street, London
21 May at 11am
Enquiries: Oliver White +44 (0) 20 7468 8303
oliver.white@bonhams.com







**Left**
Alexej von Jawlensky
(1864-1941)
*Self-portrait*, 1912

**Above**
Jawlensky in Wiesbaden, Germany,
*c*.1936

**Opposite**
Alexej von Jawlensky (1864-1941)
*Bretonin*, *c*.1906
oil on board
Estimate: £300,000 - 500,000
($400,000 - 650,000)

# A colourful past

Often described as "devout", Expressionist painter Alexej von Jawlensky was certainly devoted to his art – and to his lover's teenage maid, says ***Claire Wrathall***

By the time the Expressionist painter Alexej von Jawlensky arrived in Carantec in the summer of 1905, "wild and primitive" Brittany – as Paul Gauguin had called it almost 20 years earlier – was already established as a place to which artists travelled in search of stimulus.

"I was painting mostly still lifes," he recalls in his memoir of 1937, "because in them I could more easily find myself [and] express in colour and form the thing that was vibrating within me, and I achieved some good results."

As is evident from this painting of a Breton woman, *Bretonin*, which Bonhams is offering in its Impressionist and Modern Art sale in April, he found inspiration in the light and the colours of its landscape. (He also painted houses, haystacks, cornfields and the sea, most strikingly in *The Coast near Carantec* in the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich.) But he painted people too: "Breton heads from my window". It is his increasingly stylised heads for which he is best remembered.

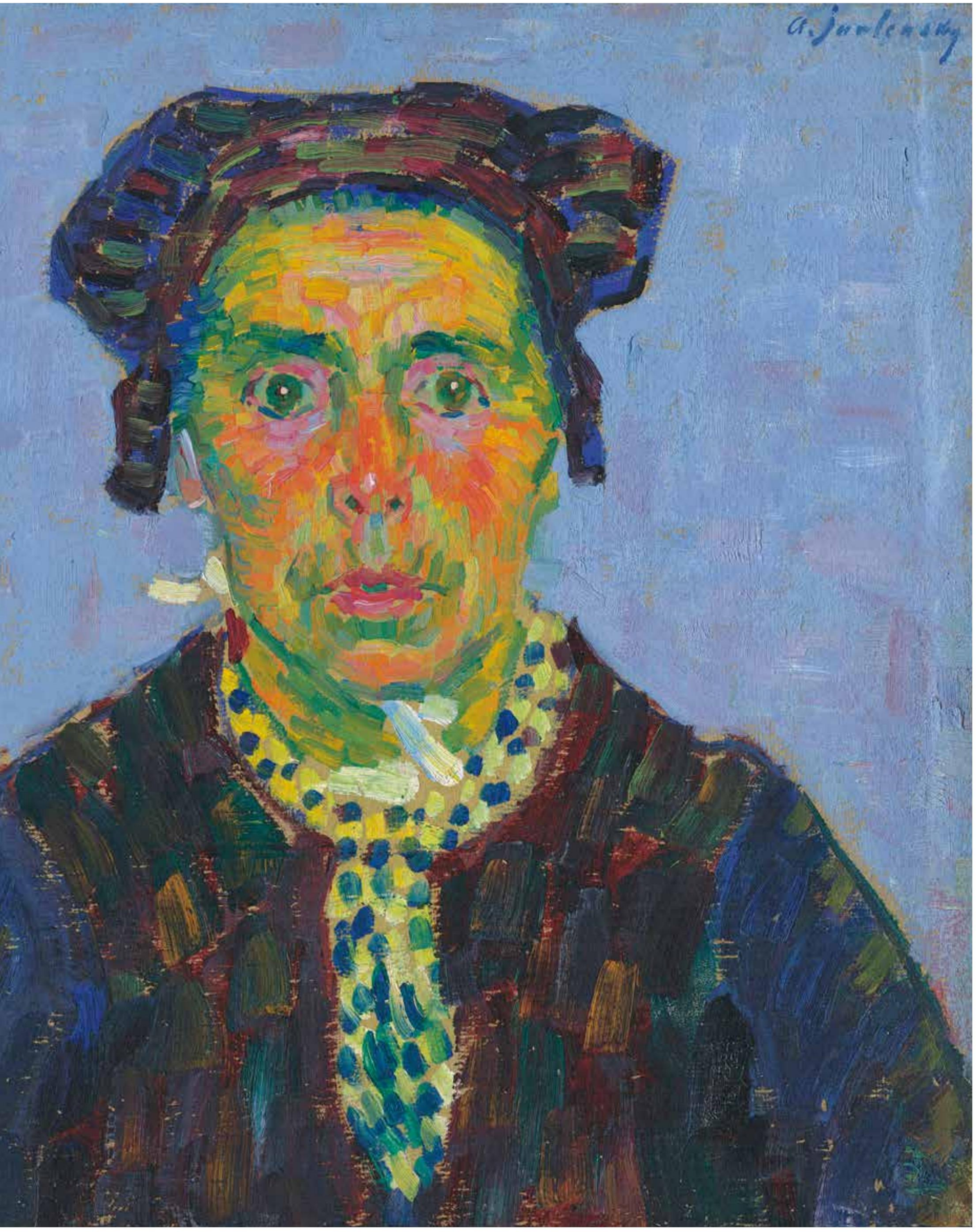
If his time in Paris introduced him to the work of Gauguin, Cézanne and Van Gogh, the summers he spent in Brittany, Normandy and Provence opened his eyes to the synaesthetic potential of colour and taught him to paint what he felt, not what he saw. Colours, he said "resound in my sight like a music, reproducing this or that mood in my soul". The cap of the *Bretonin* may at first glance strike the viewer as black, but he paints it in a multiplicity of vibrant reds and blues. And he signals her maturity by giving her a complexion that is at once yellow (those greens) and flushed (those reds and oranges). Her

## "I transferred nature into colours appropriate to the fire in my soul"

piercing emerald eyes may sparkle still, but they are ringed in pinks and blues. "I used a great deal of red, blue, orange, cadmium yellow and chromium-oxide green," he said. "My forms were very strongly contoured in Prussian blue and came with tremendous power from an inner ecstasy. ... I understood how to transfer nature into colours appropriate to the fire in my soul. The pictures were glowing with colour. And my inner self was contented."

Born in 1864 in the ancient Russian city of Torzhok, the






© National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

**Left**
Bavarian summers: Alexej von Jawlensky's *Murnau*, *c*.1910

**Below**
'In the face, the whole universe is revealed': Alexej von Jawlensky's *Girl with the Green Face*, 1910

**Opposite left**
Andreas and Alexej von Jawlensky in the garden, 1927


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son of a colonel, Jawlensky was a promising cadet in the Imperial Guard when he visited the All-Russia Exhibition of Industry and Art in Moscow in 1882. He was transfixed by the paintings. "I was touched by grace," he wrote, "like the Apostle Paul at the moment of his conversion. My life was totally transformed. And since that day art has been my only passion…".

There was no question of changing career, but in 1889 – by now an officer, still unable to resign his commission – he enrolled at the Academy of Arts in St Petersburg. At least until his discharge, he combined both callings.

Among his teachers was the great realist painter Ilya Repin. It was through him that Jawlensky, then 28, met the artist Marianne von Werefkin, 32, who was studying privately with Repin because the Academy did not admit women. Highly educated, fluent in half a dozen languages, a keen subscriber to European art magazines and so talented that Repin compared her work to Velázquez and Rembrandt, she was the daughter of a general – and she and Jawlensky soon became friends. He would attend the salons she held at the Peter and Paul Fortress, where her father was commandant, and for three years they shared a studio. In 1896, on the death of her father, she inherited a generous pension of 7,000 roubles a year, contingent on her remaining unmarried. She and Jawlensky left Petersburg for Munich, whereupon she gave up painting for a decade in order to mentor and support him, not least by establishing another influential salon in their elegant home on Giselastrasse in then bohemian Schwabing.

Theirs was an unconventional relationship. As she wrote (in French) in her epistolary autobiography *Lettres à un inconnu: Aux sources de l'expressionisme* (1901, but published posthumously), "For four years we have slept together. But I remain a virgin, and he has become a virgin again. Between us sleeps our child – art. It is the child who ensures our undisturbed sleep. Carnal desire has never once befouled our bed. We both want to remain unsullied, so that not a single impure thought could ever disturb the calm of our nights when we are so close to each other. And yet we love each other. Since we exchanged declarations of love many years ago, we have not kissed once even for form's sake. He is everything for me, I love him as a mother, especially as a mother, as a friend, a sister, a wife, I love him as an artist and a friend. He loves in me his art, and without me he'd die – but he has never enjoyed me as a woman."

The biographer and translator Rosamund Bartlett attributes this to her "apparent revulsion towards sex". Jawlensky was not so chaste. In January 1902, his son Andreas was born to Werekfin's teenage maid, Elena Neznakomova, later Hélène Nesnakomoff. The child was passed off as his nephew; Nesnakomoff kept her job; and Jawlensky's relationship with Werefkin endured for another 18 years.

Thereafter, she and Jawlensky began to travel, first to Venice and then in subsequent years to France. There, thanks to a meeting with the impresario and fellow Russian Sergei Diaghilev, Jawlensky exhibited in the 1905 Salon d'Automne, the show at which works by Les Fauves ('wild beasts') were first hung together. Matisse's use of vivid, often unnaturalistic colours and distorted forms made a particularly great impression on Jawlensky.

By 1908, he and Werefkin were settled back in Munich, and she was painting again in an increasingly Expressionist style. That year their neighbours, Wassily Kandinsky – another Russian émigré – and his student turned partner Gabriele Münter, invited them to spend the summer at Murnau in the foothills of the Bavarian Alps. There the four



© Alexej von Jawlensky-Archiv Muralto/CH





**Above**
Marianne von Werefkin's *Self-portrait I,* 1910

**Above right**
Jawlensky's *Hélène in a Spanish Costume*, 1904

of them set up the Neue Künstlervereinigung München (New Association of Artists Munich), a precursor to Der Blaue Reiter, which Kandinsky went on to form with Franz Marc, and with which Jawlensky and Werefkin exhibited, though never formally members.

It disbanded at the start of World War I, at which point Kandinsky returned to Russia, and Jawlensky

## "He loves in me his art, and without me he'd die – but he has never enjoyed me as a woman"

and Werefkin fled to Zurich, where they fell in with the Dadaists, and later to Lugano and Ascona in Italy. As the war raged, so her Imperial Army pension dwindled, until the Russian Revolution put a stop to it completely, and she was forced to find work as a stage manager. In 1920, Jawlensky left her, followed by Nesnakomoff and their now grown-up son Andreas, who went on to become an artist himself. Two years later, Jawlensky and Nesnakomoff were married in Wiesbaden, where they lived until his death in 1941.

Perhaps inevitably he made dozens of paintings of her, the earliest in 1894 when she was still a child who had just come to work for Werefkin's family in Russia. The best known are probably *Hélène with a Colored Turban* (1910) in the Guggenheim in New York and *Hélène in a Spanish Costume* (1904), now in the collection of the Museum Wiesbaden, not far from the Russian Orthodox church where he and Hélène are buried. Though his catalogue raisonné lists more than 150 female nudes among the 2,000 or so works it records, she always appeared clothed. (She did, however, serve as a life model for Werefkin, notably in two gouache, pencil and ink drawings, in which she wears only stockings and a hat.)

Jawlensky continued to work prolifically after their wedding, and in 1924 joined Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Lyonel Feininger to form Die Blaue Vier ('the Blue Four'). The group exhibited widely for the next decade, not least in the US, until crippling arthritis stopped him painting.

If Jawlensky died a model of bourgeois respectability, his was a life somewhat at odds with all that has been written about his piety. (The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* calls him "devout".) There is no doubt that his portraits and heads, especially the later ones, were influenced by Russian icons, with their elongated forms and delineated features, their mystical intensity, even in their use of green, the colour used in Eastern Orthodox iconography to denote renewal, eternity and the force of life. "For me the face is not just a face but the whole universe," he said. "In the face, the whole universe is revealed." But his devotion was to art not God. He may have painted with what he called "religious feeling"; he may have regarded the human face as possessed of a divine spirit; but art, he said, was "no longer life distilled, but life itself: wounded, passionate, confused, self-contradictory." Art, he believed, was "nostalgia for God".

*Claire Wrathall writes for the* Financial Times.

Sale: Impressionist & Modern Art
New Bond Street, London
18 April at 4pm
Enquiries: Ruth Woodbridge
+44 (0) 20 7468 5816
ruth.woodbridge@bonhams.com
bonhams.com/departments





**Above**
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York *c*.1914

**Left**
The Far Eastern Art Wing of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1925

**Opposite**
A selection of blue-and-white ceramics from the Kangxi period, to be offered by Bonhams in March

# East meets west

The high financiers of the Gilded Age were entranced by art from China and Japan, says ***Susan Moore.*** This March, Bonhams is offering some of their treasures from the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

A collecting mania overtook America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and Asian art played a significant part in it. Western interest in the East Asia was spurred not only by the unfettered opening of China and then Japan to international trade in the middle of the 19th century, but also by Chinese and Japanese participation in the great world's fairs. At the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, which saw more than 27 million visitors, Japan was accorded more space – and works of art – than any other nation. The displays evidently piqued the interest of many, given the thousands – perhaps tens of thousands – of Chinese and Japanese works of art amassed in often epic quantities by US collectors during these decades. Those who benefited from the booming American industrial economy – not least railroad, mining and retail tycoons and financiers – now had colossal fortunes at their disposal. Europe, the Near and Far East were all, for different reasons, amenable to offers and duly offered up treasures.

Each of the 24 illustrious figures whose donations form the content of Passion and Philanthropy: Chinese Art from the Metropolitan Museum of Art to be offered at Bonhams New York contributed their time, wealth, and passion to support and expand the great collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. They played their part in a continuing tradition of philanthropy founded in mid-19th century America, when highly successful business leaders of the Gilded Age, their partners and families assumed a role of cultural leadership and responsibility in their

> "Railroad, mining and retail tycoons now had colossal fortunes at their disposal"

growing cities to enrich the lives of the public. Using well-honed business skills that made them millionaires in the financial houses, railroads, stock yards, and department stores, these leaders of industry founded and ran libraries, orchestras and expositions, designed to serve the public and financed to do so. One of the major results of these business-civic partnerships was the founding of four major museums in the short span of ten years, led by the













**Above** A group of archaistic jades from The Metropolitan Mueum of Art, to be offered by Bonhams in March

**Above right** A brilliant blue and white 'lotus' mallet vase
Xuande mark, Kangxi period
Estimate: $15,000 - 20,000

**Above far right** A pale green and russet jade 'dragon' boulder
18th century
Estimate: $8,000 - 12,000

**Right** John D. Rockefeller Jr (1874-1960) in 1942

**Far right** Portrait of Samuel Putnam Avery (1822-1904), one of the founders of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, by Charles Loring Elliott, 1863

Metropolitan Museum of Art (1870), the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1876), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1876) and the Art Institute of Chicago (1879).

The great Expositions of the late 19th century – the 1867 Paris Exhibition Universelle, the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago – and a core group of collector-advisors and dealers – provided a venue for and guidance to the great early collectors of the Gilded Age from the 1870s to the 1920s. In Europe, Samuel Bing, Matsui Bunkio, C.T. Loo, Joseph and Henry Duveen – and in America, Samuel Avery, William Sturgis Bigelow, Edward Morse and Ernest Fenollosa, assisted collectors such as Henry O. Havemeyer, Samuel T. Peters, John Pierpont Morgan, among many others, to form great collections of Chinese and Japanese art which are now part of these major institutions.

As a commissioner of Fine Arts to the 1862 Paris Exhibition Universelle, Samuel P. Avery (1822-1904), already a collector of European paintings and Chinese porcelain, encouraged his friend, William Thompson Walters (1819-1894) to augment his budding Japanese collection with Chinese porcelain. Avery became a highly respected art advisor in New York; access to knowledge of Chinese art connoisseurship was enhanced by Avery's brother who became US Minister to China in 1874. Samuel Avery made sure that every public collection had Chinese ceramics. 82 objects from his seminal 1879 sale of more than 1,300 Chinese and Japanese porcelains to the Met are included in this sale.

The Philadelphia Centennial Exposition broadened the opportunities for acquisition by such illustrious figures as Henry O. Havemeyer, Charles Stewart Smith, and Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Coleman who became early benefactors to the Metropolitan Museum. The 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition opened the floodgates of opportunity for board members of the newly founded Art Institute of Chicago to broaden their interests from

## "Whistler described the 'curious' paintings on them as 'the finest specimens of Art'"

Impressionist paintings to acquire Chinese and Japanese art. Inspired, or just competitive, Marshall Field (1834-1906) stepped up with eight million dollars cash to found the Field Museum; he hired his first curator, Berthold Laufer (1874-1934) in 1911.

Charles Lang Freer was encouraged to collect by the success of the World's Columbian Exposition. As one of the greatest and most highly respected collectors of the early 20th century, Freer and his Detroit home and later New York residence became a place of pilgrimage for collectors, museum curators and dealers, among them the Havemeyers, Samuel T. Peters, Agnes and Eugene Meyer and S.C. Bosch-Reitz, the Met's curator of Far Eastern Art from 1912-1927. Freer, Berthold Laufer and A.W. Bahr





**Left**
A massive lime-green sgraffito-ground enamelled vase with dragon handles
Qianlong/Jiaqing period
Estimate: $80,000 - 120,000

**Above**
The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1918

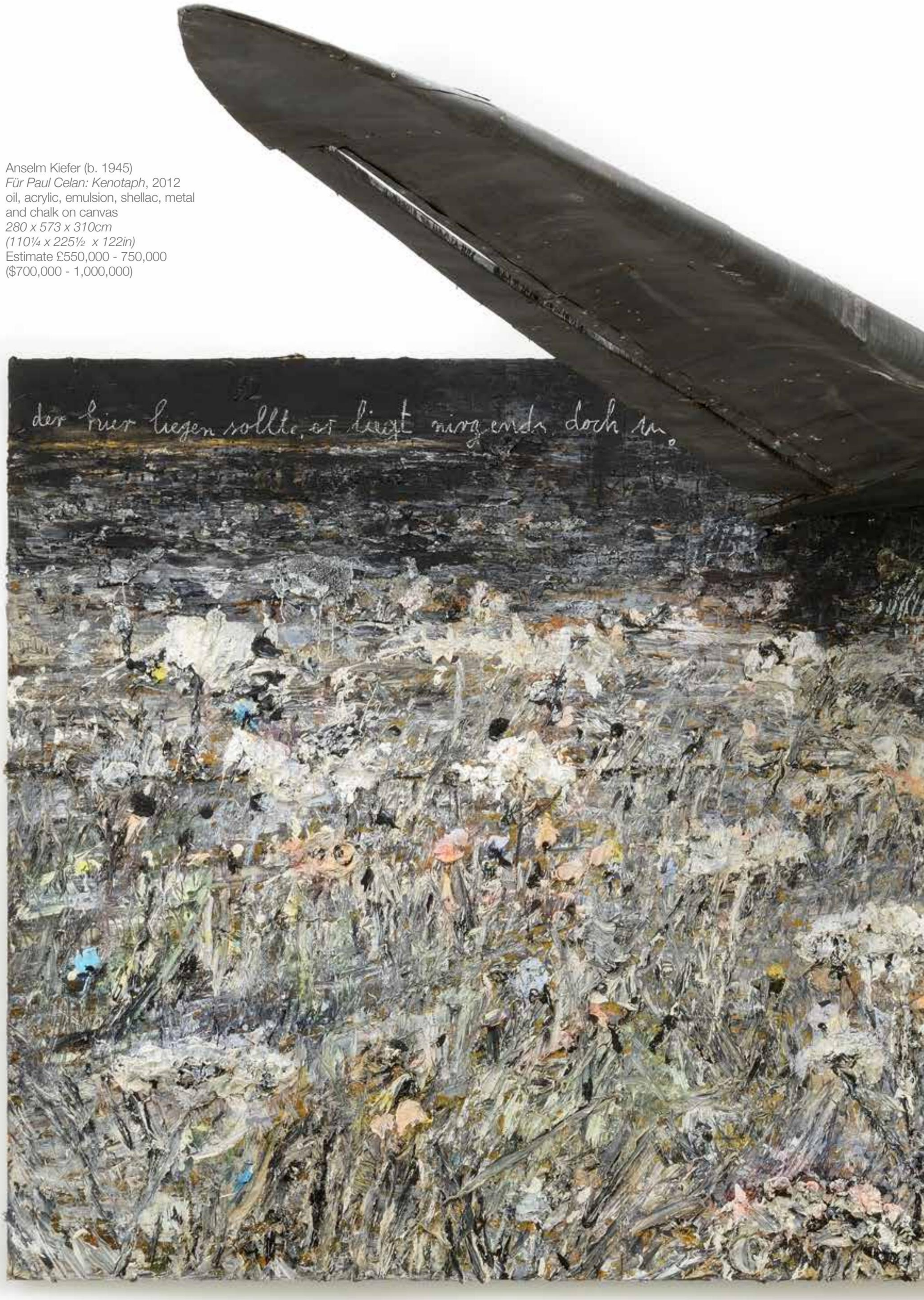
shared an interest in early jades at a time when little was known of Neolithic China's jade outside the work of Wu Dacheng (1835-1902), whose 1889 illustrated work titled Guyu tukao contained line drawings of known jade types and information on their function based upon classical texts. While both Laufer and Freer made extensive trips to China between 1901 and 1911 and there met collectors and dealers such as C.T. Loo, Yamanaka Sadajiro, Huang Jun, and Duanfang, there was no archaeological basis on which to date the examples they saw and purchased. Freer shared his interest, current knowledge and passion with his friend, Samuel T. Peters, a Trustee of The Metropolitan Museum from 1914 to 1921, and a distinguished collector of Chinese Imperial porcelain. Peters formed his own large collection of jade based on the current standards of connoisseurship and knowledge of the day and donated it to The Met in three stages (1911, 1913 and 1916). The 1911 and 1913 donations were purchased from Yamanaka, who had established a branch of his business in New York in 1895. Peters' October 22, 1921 New York Times obituary records his gifts as "a collection probably unsurpassed anywhere." **Total of over three-hundred and thirty pieces from these three donations are included in this upcoming auction.

While the majority of the objects offered in this important auction come from two donors, the other distinguished figures whose donations complete the corpus of this sale include giants in the history of American industry and philanthropy who contributed their knowledge, energy, passion and wealth during and after their lifetime to the Metropolitan Museum. This upcoming auction is an opportunity to own a piece of history from this great American institution.

*Susan Moore writes for the* Financial Times.

Sale: Passion and Philanthropy:
Chinese Art from The Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York 18 March
Enquiries: Dessa Goddard +1 415 503 3333
dessa.goddard@bonhams.com

Anselm Kiefer (b. 1945)
*Für Paul Celan: Kenotaph*, 2012
oil, acrylic, emulsion, shellac, metal and chalk on canvas
*280 x 573 x 310cm*
*(110¼ x 225½ x 122in)*
Estimate £550,000 - 750,000
($700,000 - 1,000,000)



# Scars of the world

Born in the closing days of the Second World War, the German painter Anselm Kiefer found inspiration in the fragmented lyricism of poet Paul Celan, says ***Alastair Smart***



© Anselm Kiefer/Photo: Anders Sune Berg/Courtesy Copenhagen Contemporary



© Charles Duprat 2014



© Anselm Kiefer/Photo: Anders Sune Berg/Courtesy Copenhagen Contemporary

**Above**
Anselm Kiefer (b.1945)
*S Hg NaCl*, 2012

**Above right**
The artist at work:
Portrait of Anselm Kiefer

**Right & opposite**
Steeped in history: Kiefer's
*Für Louis-Ferdinand Céline:*
*Voyage au bout de la nuit*, 2016

In 1949, the German philosopher Theodor Adorno suggested that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is… impossible". His idea was that the horrors of the Holocaust had rendered art redundant. Two men whose careers might be seen as attempts to grapple with Adorno's proposition are the artist Anselm Kiefer and the poet Paul Celan (1920-1970). The latter inspired the former's 2012 painting, *Für Paul Celan: Kenotaph*, offered in Bonhams' Post-War and Contemporary Art sale in London in March.

Kiefer was born in 1945, during the final months of the Second World War, in a small town in southern Germany. As a baby, his mother and father (an art teacher) used to stuff wax in his ears and flee with him into the forest when Allied bombers raided. He says he spent his childhood "growing up in ruins", and an artistic urge first manifested itself in tiny houses that he created out of the rubble.

Studies took him to Freiburg, Karlsruhe and finally Düsseldorf, where he became a protégé to Joseph Beuys at the Fine Arts Academy. Though his official title was Professor of Sculpture, Beuys was first and foremost a provocateur – and he heaped praise on Kiefer's controversial breakthrough series 'Occupations' (1969).

This consisted of photographs of Kiefer dressed in a Wehrmacht uniform, doing the infamous Sieg Heil salute at European monuments. 'Occupations' marked Kiefer's refusal to accept what the author W.G. Sebald called a "tacit agreement" in German post-war society not to address the Nazi past.

That tortured past infuses Kiefer's work. However, as he and his art matured, particularly from the 1980s, he exponentially broadened his range of references. He started creating work that reflected his omnivorous interests and travels: from the mysticism of the Kabbalah and Norse mythology to alchemy, Mesopotamian architecture and the crackpot Futurist poetry of Russia's Velimir Khlebnikov. "Art cannot live on itself," Kiefer once said. "It has to draw on a broader knowledge. It needs to bear the scars of the world."

Kiefer is a painter who tends to work on very large canvases and applies his paint in impasto, churning it into peaks and troughs, working and reworking his surfaces

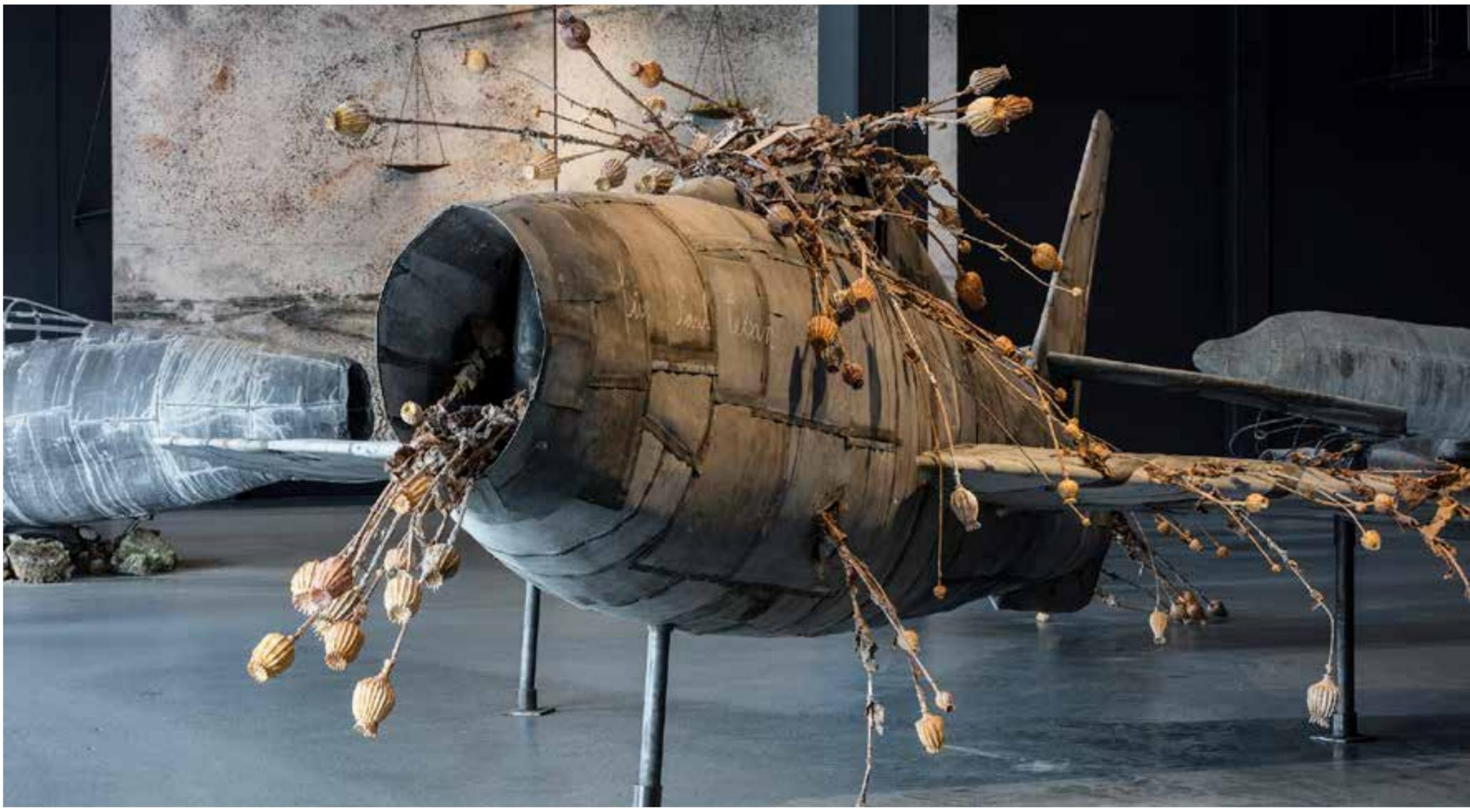
"Art cannot live on itself. … It needs to bear the scars of the world"

seemingly ad infinitum. He deploys a host of other materials too – sand, rust, dirt, ash and glass. Sometimes dried flowers or barbed wire stick out at us from the canvas. His paintings might well be considered sculptures.

Richly allusive, highly symbolic connections emerge – connections that have catapulted the 79-year-old German to art superstardom. In 2022, he was invited to stage an exhibition at the Doge's Palace in Venice; in 2023, he was the subject of a swooning 3D documentary film, *Anselm*, by Wim Wenders; and this spring he opens a major show at the Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi in Florence.

Such is his renown that his long-time studio complex, La Ribaute – occupying a 100-acre site near Nîmes in the south of France – now opens in summer for public visits.

Kiefer is well known for his landscapes, and *Für Paul Celan: Kenotaph* is a classic example. Created on a trio



© Anselm Kiefer/Photo: Anders Sune Berg/Courtesy Copenhagen Contemporary

of conjoined canvases, it measures six metres across. There are sprinkles of colour – gorgeous hints of blue, pink and yellow – but overall the palette is low-key. It is a field of (real) flowers, which show limited signs of life as they have been dried out and covered by Kiefer in layers of oil, acrylic and shellac.

The landscape manages to look ancient and modern at the same time. The broadly black-white-and-grey palette gives a sense of the old, yet the stunning sight of an aeroplane wing jutting out of the canvas suggests a scene from the past century.

Are we meant to imagine the crash of one of the Allied bombers whose flights greeted the artist's first weeks on Earth? Or a downed Messerschmitt as a metaphor for Germany's defeat in 1945? Neither interpretation is wrong, but it never pays to read Kiefer paintings in simplistic or autobiographical terms. Their many threads of meaning are difficult to unpick.

Nonetheless, the name of the work is instructive, as is the small inscription that Kiefer has added in chalk above the wing. The title pays homage to Celan's 1954 poem 'Kenotaph', a pair of lines from which provide the inscription: *Der hier liegen sollte, er liegt/nirgends. Doch liegt die Welt neben ihm* ('He who was supposed to lie here lies/nowhere. Yet the world lies beside him').

A little background on the poet – one of Kiefer's keenest inspirations – is necessary at this point. Celan was born into a German-speaking, Jewish family in 1920 in the city of Czernowitz: today the Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi, it was an eastern outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, before becoming part of Romania in 1918.

Both Celan's parents died in concentration camps during the Second World War, and he was forced to work in a labour camp. Those experiences were a key theme of his poetry, all of it written in German. It's worth stressing, though, that Celan's version of German has been rendered increasingly abstract, as if the language needed cleansing from the toxic populism of Nazi hate speech.

Kiefer first encountered Celan's verse as a teenager and is such a devotee that he is able to recite numerous poems by heart. "Paul Celan [didn't] just look at the void, he experienced it, he penetrated it," the artist said recently. "His language comes from so far away… we only really understand a fraction here and there."

The poem 'Kenotaph' takes its title – and theme – from the Greek for 'empty tomb'. This is picked up by the painting's inscription: 'He who was supposed to lie here lies/nowhere'. The reference is to Holocaust victims, who weren't afforded the dignity of a grave.

Celan has been an artistic inspiration for Kiefer since 1980, and in the winter of 2021-22 the latter put on a whole exhibition of works dedicated to the poet at Paris's Grand Palais Éphémère. "Paul Celan… never leaves me," the artist said shortly before that show's opening.

*'Anselm Kiefer: Fallen Angels' is at Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, from 22 March to 21 July; palazzostrozzi.org*

*Alastair Smart writes for* The Daily Telegraph, The Independent *and* The Mail on Sunday. *He is currently writing a book on Raphael.*

Sale: Post-War & Contemporary Art
New Bond Street, London
21 March at 4pm
Enquiries: Leonie Grainger +44 (0) 20 3988 6315
leonie.grainger@bonhams.com



# All fired up

## Elsa Schiaparelli lived in combustible times, but created clothes of such panache and artistry that her influence seems never to wane, writes ***Philippa Stockley***

For most people, the name Schiaparelli immediately evokes witty, surreal women's clothes: a hat like an upturned shoe, a suit with pockets that look like drawers. In 1936, Elsa Schiaparelli did indeed create those remarkable things, in collaboration with Surrealist supremo Salvador Dalí. But her extraordinary life and career held much more. A prolific creator of dazzling work, in her heyday producing biannual collections of 70 models, she was described by *The New Yorker* writer Janet Flanner as "a comet". Her oeuvre was broad: smart day suits and chic summer dresses, plus, post-1934, instantly recognisable evening wear smothered in magnificent, glittering, often trompe l'oeil embroidery by world-famous company Lesage. And she constantly innovated.

For years, only Gabrielle Chanel rivalled her. The fiercely competitive Chanel tried to dismiss her as "that Italian artist who makes clothes", and once set Schiaparelli aflame at a ball by steering her into a lit candelabra.

> "Chanel… once set her rival aflame at a ball by steering her into a lit candelabra"

Elsa Luisa Maria was born into a cultivated Roman family in 1890, in Palazzo Corsini. The palazzo's important 17th-century library, the Accademia dei Lincei, which held works on subjects ranging from orientalism to astronomy, was presided over by her father Celestino, an Islamic scholar. From her mother's side came aristocratic Neapolitan blood. Destined for a conventional marriage, clever, imaginative Elsa had other ideas. At 23, she went to London, met a flashy 30-year-old chancer with various names and nationalities, got engaged the next day and was married on 21 July 1914, before her parents could stop her. Husband Willie – Comte William de Wendt de Kerlor – claimed to be a criminal psychologist, phrenologist and palm reader. Incredibly, after he was deported in 1916 for fortune telling – which was illegal – the new Comtesse de Kerlor went to France, then America, with this charlatan and sponger. He was soon under investigation by the precursor to the FBI. Perhaps he showed her the power of self-assurance.

In 1920, their daughter, nicknamed Gogo, was born. Willie left soon after. No shirker, Elsa tried to find work, but in 1921 Gogo developed polio. Fortunately, Elsa had made friends with Gaby Picabia, wife of Dadaist Francis. This happy and useful friendship introduced her to like-minded artists and writers, including Man Ray. In 1922, another friend, Blanche Hays, offered Elsa passage to France. She leapt at it. But, as biographer Meryle Secrest says, "aged 32, Schiaparelli had no money, no career, no future, and a very sick daughter". Many would have gone home. Not Elsa Schiaparelli.

Paris was thrilling, cheap and popular with foreign artists, from Picasso and Modigliani to Hemingway and Fitzgerald. It thrummed with artistic energy. Sporty, short, uncorseted clothes and cropped hair were everywhere. Former leading couturier Paul Poiret's star was fading, but Jean Patou designed youthful clothes that allowed free movement. So did Chanel. Artists, writers and dress designers collaborated. Nascent Surrealism blurred art and fashion.

Elsa shared a large apartment with Blanche Hays, and Gaby looked after Gogo. Small (she was only five-feet tall), dark, intense Elsa was taken up. She met future artist-collaborators, including Jean Cocteau; Man Ray took her to Le Boeuf sur le Toit nightclub, favoured by heiresses Nancy Cunard and Daisy Fellowes. These two wealthy fashion leaders would abandon Chanel for Schiaparelli, becoming loyal clients, along with many film stars: Greta Garbo, Katharine Hepburn, Vivien Leigh, Lauren Bacall, Ginger Rogers, plus handfuls of princesses and rich aristocrats. Even Mamie Eisenhower.

Inspired by Poiret, Elsa (who didn't sew) draped and pinned clothes for Gaby, beginning a fledgling career. Her break came in 1927. She admired a jumper knitted by an Armenian woman called Aroosiag Mikaelian (called 'Mike') using a three-needle technique. She sketched a



Photo: © Horst P. Horst/Condé Nast/Shutterstock

**This page**
Elsa Schiaparelli looking in a mirror whilst wearing one of her ensembles. Taken for the September issue of *Vogue* 1937






**Above**
A Schiaparelli ensemble featured in *Vogue*, January 1938

**Below**
Schiaparelli jacket
Damask silk embroidered by Maison Lesage with gold leaf, sequins, and metal threads, circa 1939
Estimate: €800 - 1,000

**Above left**
Schiaparelli jacket
Damask silk embellished with beads of jet and sequins and embroidered by Maison Lesage, Haute Couture Collection
Winter 1942
Estimate: €2,000 - 3,000

**Above right**
Schiaparelli evening jacket
Designed in brocade with floral decoration and aubergine velvet cuffs embroidered in silver and gold thread by Maison Lesage
Haute Couture Collection
Spring 1939
Estimate: €6,000 - 8,000

sweater whose trompe l'oeil pussy-bow had a cartoonish drop-shadow, and asked Mike to knit it.

Worn to an important socialite luncheon, it caused a furore. A US buyer asked for 40 – with matching skirts. Elsa said yes, then got Mike to find other Armenian knitters. The December 1927 issue of *Vogue* called the bow sweater "an artistic masterpiece". New York manufacturers immediately made rip-offs – but it spread Elsa's fame; indeed, the United States would become her biggest market.

Along with Charles Khan of Galeries Lafayette, she launched the company Schiaparelli (she bought him out in 1930). She wanted an atelier – and found

## "Designed during the Great Depression, the 'Speakeasy' dress had a secret pocket for a flask"

a tiny one in Rue de la Paix. 'Schiaparelli' went straight over the door.

A creative whirlwind followed. Clothing innovations came quick-fire: bras inside swimwear (patented 1930), wrap dresses, evening jackets to match dresses (1931), the 1932 'Mad Cap' of tubular wool (which a US manufacturer copied, renamed the 'Pixie Hat', and made a fortune), zips as defiant embellishments. During the Great Depression, which Schiaparelli's 400 workers survived, the 'Speakeasy' dress had a secret pocket for a flask. When war loomed, Schiaparelli offered capsule wardrobes – and huge pockets to carry vital items. Many new fabrics were pioneered with the







**Far left**
*Vogue,* December 1927
Featuring the Schiaparelli bow sweater

**Left**
Schiaparrelli, Haute Couture Collection
Spring-Summer 1938
Pagan Collection
Gold Metal Necklace
Estimate €3,000 - 5,000

manufacturer Colcombet, from synthetic jersey (1933) to Rhodophane (1934-35), a cellophane spinoff. Rayon was textured or crinkled, sometimes with Lastex for stretch.

Surrealism's hyperreality and shock delighted Elsa and Dalí equally. From 1936, among a spate of designs that included the renowned black 'Skeleton' dress, they created that tailored suit with drawer-like pockets, and the famous shoe hat. A white organza dress, screenprinted with a giant Dalí lobster, its tail-fan at the crotch, was one of 18 Schiaparelli designs snapped up by Wallis Simpson for her 1937 trousseau, and immortalised by Cecil Beaton in *Vogue*.

The same year, Elsa designed costumes for Mae West in *Every Day's a Holiday*. Too grand to travel, West sent a plaster model of her curvaceous torso. The costumes were shipped – but she had got fatter and everything was remade. However, the plaster torso inspired the sensual flacon that Surrealist Leonor Fini designed for the perfume Shocking!, whose sales kept Elsa afloat for decades.

Equally recognisable as Schiaparelli were the superbly embellished and beaded garments produced from 1934 onwards. To make them, Elsa rescued the famed embroidery company Lesage from closure. Producing three-dimensional effects in glittering gold, silver, jet, sequins and beads, the results were astounding, spurring ever greater flights of fantasy. Take the 'Neptune Cape', bought by Lady Mendl, who sparkled and shimmered in it like its namesake fountain at Versailles: it was another work of art.

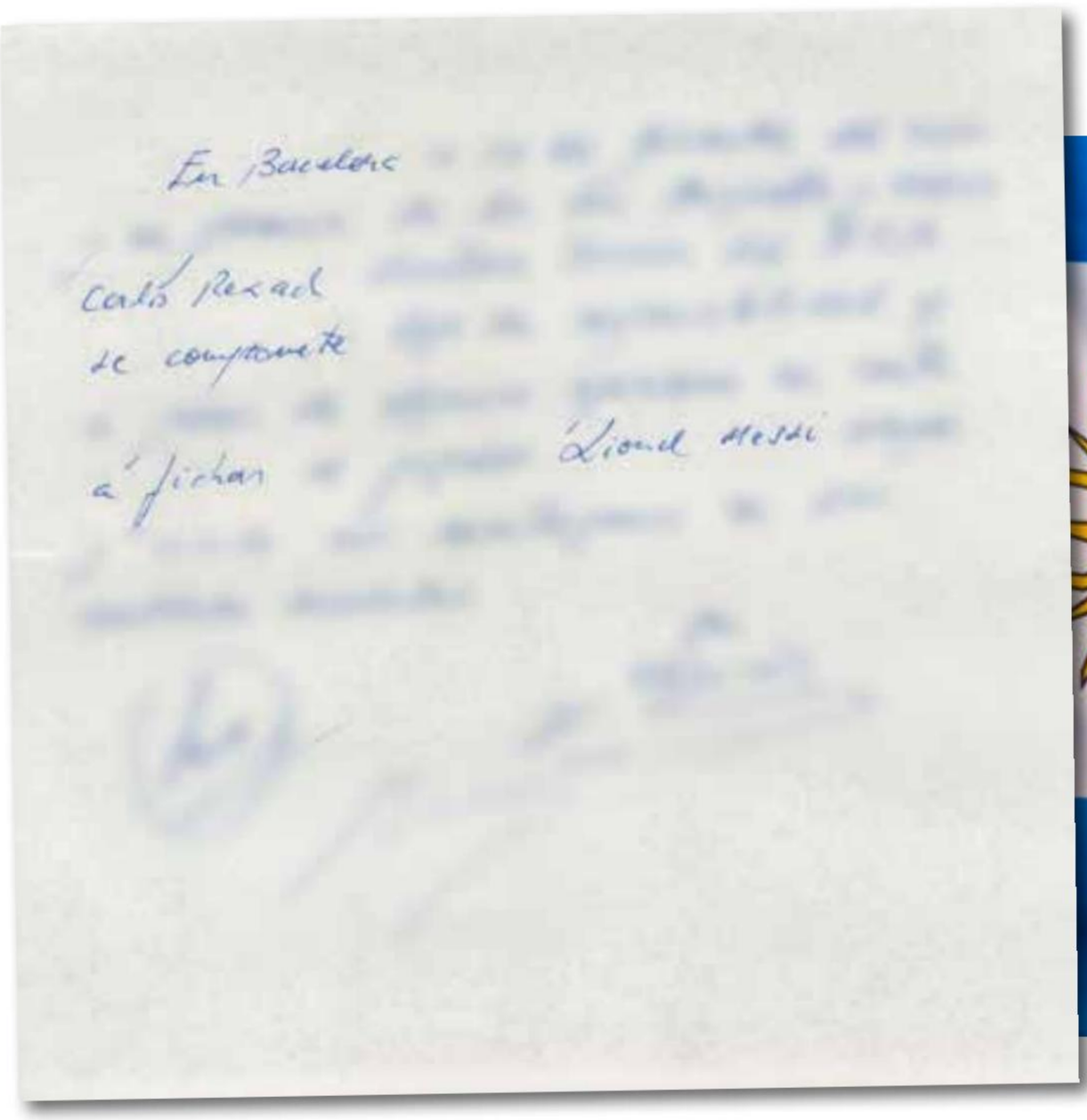
From 1935, even grander showrooms in Place Vendôme presented the collections. Garments were further adorned with specially designed signature buttons, fashioned as anything from cupids to carrots, some by Jean Clément, others by naturalistic designer Jean Schlumberger, who later joined Tiffany & Co. It was logical to add jewellery, extending Schiaparelli's unique synthesis of bizarre and beautiful. Standouts were a transparent neck collar crawling with insects, and a necklace of gold metal leaves splashed with luminous red and green enamel, with metal bees, from the 1938 'Pagan' collection, offered in Paris in April's sale: 1910 - 2010: One Hundred Years of Haute Couture, along with three jackets dating from 1938 to 1942.

Schiaparelli's brilliance accelerated in the decade's final years. Genuinely fantastic balls – the Silver, the Gold, the White – provided opportunities for lavish couture, and were widely covered by fashion magazines. As war approached, Paris designers responded with an orgy of ravishing clothes for apparently endless parties. Schiaparelli even made a dress with a bustle, harking back to the Belle Époque.

War swept everything away. Elsa went to America until 1945. She reopened, but – even assisted by a young Hubert de Givenchy – her focus seemed gone. The mood had changed: Surrealism was dead and the cavalcade had passed by. Recognising this, she closed in 1954. Elsa Schiaparelli died in 1973.

*Philippa Stockley's many books include the novel* Murderous Liaisons.

Sale: 1910- 2010: One Hundred Years of Haute Couture
Paris
9 April at 2pm
Enquiries: Hubert Felbacq +33 1 56 79 12 45
hubert.felbacq@bonhams-csc.com


En Barcelone
Carlo Rexach
se compromette
à signer
Lionel Messi



**Left**
The napkin on which a commitment was made to Messi for a contract from FC Barcelona
Estimate:
£300,000 - 500,000

**Opposite**
The Lionel Messi story: more thrilling than Roy of the Rovers

# Boy wonder

Everyone could see his talent, but Messi was too small for professional football. Those 850 goals might never have happened but for three signatures on a humble napkin, says ***Sid Lowe***. Illustration by ***James Hatcher***

The tiny, mute kid who would be a deity had just boarded a plane for only the second time in his life and now all he could do was wait. Lionel Andrés Messi, who would change football forever, had arrived in Europe on a Sunday. It was 17 September 2000, he was 13, barely 4ft 10in high, and he didn't say a word, but as soon as he had a ball at his feet everyone *knew*: this was a gift, *he* was a gift. A game was arranged so that the technical secretary at Futbol Club Barcelona could watch him play. He is name is Charly Rexach and he was late – Charly is always late – but it didn't matter: by the time he had arrived, walked round the pitch and taken up his place on the bench, he knew too.

"We have to sign this kid right now," he said then. "Anyone would have said the same," he says now.

Only they didn't. Barcelona were in chaos, a mess. So Messi was back in Argentina, his trial period up. Barcelona had made assurances but nothing had actually happened. October passed, November passed. The kid's father was getting angry, threatening to take his son somewhere else. Maybe even Madrid, some turning point that. Still no one was actually doing anything. December was slipping by, destiny too, until Rexach decided to act. Alone if need be, but things couldn't go on like this. "I'll go down in Barcelona's history," he says, a quarter of a century later.

Born in Pedralbes, the smart neighbourhood up the hill from the Camp Nou, Rexach joined Barcelona aged 12 and spent half a century there, on and off. He played for the first team for 17 years and has been coach, assistant coach, technical secretary and presidential adviser. But that's not why he will go down in Barcelona's history. No, he will go down in Barcelona's history, and everyone else's too, because one day he signed Messi – on a serviette. A tiny, huge piece of history, now offered by Bonhams in The Famous Napkin sale in March. It is not much to look at but it is everything. Which is fitting, somehow.

> "'We have to sign this kid right now,' he said then. 'Anyone would have said the same,' he says now"

Without that, what would have been? Of him, of all of them? Rexach talks about Messi as having landed just right. He needed to be nurtured, to find his place. Catalonia became home. Without Barcelona, he might not have been the same; without him, Barcelona wouldn't be. From the start, things changed. In the academy the kids were told to play one-touch or even *mig-toc*, as Rexach and Guardiola and Xavi would call it: half-a-touch. Messi was told, well, to do what he could do. Don't let go until he knew it was right; the ball could be barely be in a better place than at his feet.




THE KID SHOULD BE ON A BIGGER STAGE!


HE'S GOING TO BE A STAR
BUT HE'S TINY.


WHAT'S HAPPENING? IF YOU DON'T MOVE NOW THE BOY WILL BE OFF TO ARGENTINA ... OR REAL MADRID!!


GIVE ME SOMETHING I CAN WRITE ON...
OH, THIS NAPKIN WILL DO


I CAN STAY NOW!

One day Ronaldinho saw him and said: "This kid will be even better than me." At that time, that hardly seemed likely, but he was right. Barcelona had only won one European Cup. Messi then won four of them. There were ten league titles. He wasn't a goalscorer but he was Europe's top goalscorer six times. He was the best player every year for 15 years, an entire generation spent making the ridiculous routine. The ball didn't need kicking, it seemed; instead it followed him like a faithful, enthusiastic puppy.

In the beginning, Johan Cruyff said Messi would probably win five, six or seven Ballon d'Ors, which seemed absurd but fell short. Widely seen as the world's finest footballer, perhaps ever, Messi may still be underrated, stupid though that sounds. He has had many victims, including himself. His 'bad' seasons were brilliant, the only man held to his standards. "Messi is Maradona every day," Jorge Valdano likes to say, and even Maradona wasn't that. When Messi finally left Barcelona, in tears, he had been at the club for 21 years and still it was too soon. He will be back one day.

All that was in the future once, and might not have been in the future at all. Messi had first crossed the Atlantic an unknown. He did so silently, which is how he did most things. He hadn't been that keen to go, but his grandmother had encouraged him, pushed him. He would dedicate every goal he ever scored to her: 850 of them, all the way to the World Cup final.

"Widely seen as the world's finest footballer, perhaps ever, Messi may still be underrated"

On board with him were his father Jorge and a man called Fabián Soldini; waiting for him in at El Prat Airport was Horacio Gaggioli. This child was gifted, Gaggioli had been told. He had been sent videos of him playing in Argentina – you will have seen them too by now, a bit fuzzy but the genius already there – and had arranged for Messi to have a trial at Barcelona. Gaggioli was acting as intermediary between his partners in Argentina, who had discovered Messi, and Barcelona. He had arranged the trial with Josep María Minguella, who had told Rexach that this kid was like Diego Maradona.

Minguella knew: he was the one who had brought Maradona to Barcelona 20 years earlier.

Barcelona had their doubts. Sure, Messi looked good, and he came with the right people, but he had growth issues: a paediatric endocrinologist had said he needed a course of hormone treatment that was a lot of money to spend on a kid. It was also the reason he was available at all: Newell's Old Boys, his club in Argentina, couldn't afford the treatment. Had he not been small, maybe he would not have been so big. At Barcelona, in Europe, all around the world, he would be gigantic. But, in 2000, you didn't just sign a 13-year-old from across the ocean.

Even Gaggioli was unsure when he saw him in the flesh for the first time, waiting there at El Prat: he was so *small*. He wondered if maybe he had been duped, if he was going to be made to look a little silly. "I thought to myself: 'This small child can't play football. He's tiny. His leg looked like a finger. They're going to break this kid's legs'."

The players they put him up against weren't much more impressed... until he got on the pitch. Gerard Piqué and Cesc Fàbregas were among them. They saw him in the dressing room and laughed. He taped up his ankles and didn't say a word. They called him *enano*, 'dwarf'. The coach asked them not to kick him, he was so small.

They would have to catch him first.

*Sign him. Now.*

And yet.

Barcelona had to find work for his father, pay him around €50,000 a year. They had to pay for the hormone treatment that, painfully, Messi injected into his legs every day: $1,000 a month. Messi was moved into the Hotel Rallye, and would later live in a flat on the Gran Vía de Carlos III with his family. From the windows of the Rallye, you can see the Camp Nou barely 50 yards away. But getting inside there was different: there's a nice story about Messi not even getting tickets to see them against Milan – even after they had agreed to sign him. And even that was hard. He had returned to Argentina with no guarantees, the feeling that this wasn't going to happen after all. Everything dragged on. Nothing was happening.

On 14 December 2000, Rexach met Minguella and Gaggioli for lunch at the Pompeia Tennis Club. "We'll go elsewhere," Gaggioli warned him. Rexach couldn't let that happen. He pulled out a napkin from the plastic holder and started scribbling: "...Carles Rexach, FC Barcelona's sporting director, hereby agrees, under his responsibility and regardless of any dissenting opinions to sign the player Lionel Messi..."

Both men signed it, history handwritten. History grasped too. Gaggioli took it away, kept it. He had it locked in a vault, more valuable than anything else in there, like some biblical artefact, without which nothing would be the same. Once in a while, he would take it out, showing it carefully, oh so carefully.

There's a fascination in reading it, and perhaps that line above all: *Regardless of any dissenting opinions.*

It is some line. Against him? Against this kid who would be a deity and could have been different. The quiet kid they laughed at and the man who won it all, the athlete who eclipsed all others, the greatest story ever told, closing with the World Cup in his hands and opening with a serviette in someone else's – his fate in those hands, too. Football's fate, all that we know. Lionel Messi had been and now he had gone again, boarding a plane back to Argentina, all that legend left waiting. Something had to to be done. And so it was written.

*Sid Lowe writes about Spanish football for* The Guardian.

Sale: The Famous Napkin
Online, London
18-27 March, starting at 12pm
Enquiries: Ian Ehling +1 212 644 9094
ian.ehling@bonhams.com

*Greatest signing ever... on paper!*
*Messi napkin contract up for sale*

**“Messi’s Barcelona contract was inked on a napkin. Bids start at $379,000”**

*Napkin used to secure Messi’s first contract with FC Barcelona to be sold at auction*

**“saldrá a subasta la servilleta que cambió la vida de Messi”**



# Top draw

Honoré Daumier's ferocious, unflinching drawings landed him in jail. No wonder, writes ***Martin Gayford***

**Main image**
Honoré-Victorin Daumier
(1808-1879)
*The Defender*
executed 1864-1865
pen and wash on paper
*18.5 x 23cm (7¼ x 9in)*

**Opposite**
IHonoré-Victorin Daumier
(1808-1879)
*At the Theatre*
*(The Dressing Room)*
watercolour and black ink
on paper
*19 x 27cm (7½ x 10⅝in)*



On Tuesday 18 September 1888, Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo. In his letter, he discussed the atmosphere of the humdrum, slightly squalid outskirts of Arles where he was living. This neighbourhood was not exactly Millet, he mused, meaning it wasn't rustic. On the contrary, he insisted, "it's pure Daumier, pure Zola".

On the day that Van Gogh wrote those words, Honoré Daumier had been dead for less than a decade. He had led a curious dual career: just as Pablo Picasso could be famously described as a 'sculptor/painter', Daumier performed a double act as a 'caricaturist/artist'.

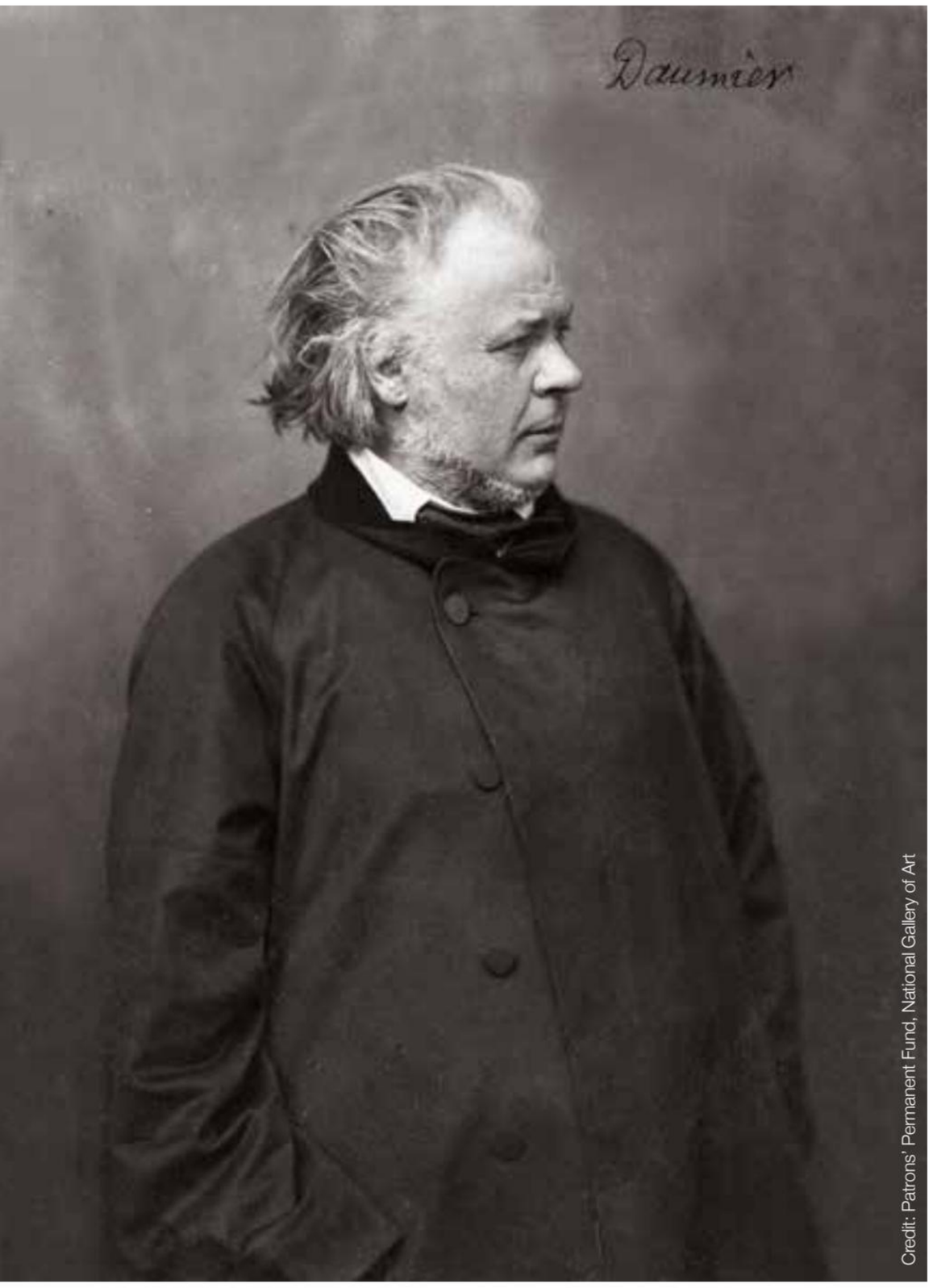
Over the years, Daumier produced a huge number of drawings for humorous magazines, fine examples of which are offered by Bonhams in Paris and London this season. He made some 3,900 contributions alone to *Le Charivari*, the French periodical that inspired *Punch*. All of these were intended to make a barbed, poignant or wryly humorous point. Underneath each appeared a description or line or two of dialogue – generally not written by Daumier himself.

In British terms, Daumier was an equivalent to Gillray, Rowlandson or 'Dickie' Doyle of *Punch*. The difference was that simultaneously and – in the opinion of posterity, at least, with great success – he aspired to be a 'serious' artist. During his lifetime, not many observers or collectors took much notice of these efforts. The poet Charles Baudelaire was not only the first but also pretty well the only critic to discuss his work.

## "Daumier's experience of courtrooms and accusations was personal – and painful"

He also dedicated a poem to the artist: 'Vers pour le portrait de M. Honoré Daumier'. It begins by stating that Daumier's art was "subtler than all others", teaching us "to laugh at ourselves". Actually, that understated his talents: Daumier could do more than that. As Van Gogh noted, Daumier was "amusing and yet full of emotion and passion". Art historically speaking, he was a master of romantic realism.

Consider a late drawing such as *The Singing Violinist* (perhaps from around 1869-73). The scholar Bruce Laughton has pointed out how everything in this




Credit: Patrons' Permanent Fund, National Gallery of Art







**Clockwise from far left**
Portrait of Daumier, taken by Nadar *c.*1856-58

Honoré-Victorin Daumier (1808-1879)
*The Domino Players*
pen and ink, wash and pencil on paper
*5.3 x 8.4cm (2 x 3in)*
Estimate: €8,000 - 12,000

*The Singing Violinist*
ink, wash and pencil on paper
*30 x 21cm (11x 8¼in)*
Estimate: €35,000 - 55,000

character study is centred on the the street musician's "open mouth, cavernous and exposing a single tooth". The elderly musician's fixed stare suggests he might be blind: you can almost hear his voice and the piercing sound of the accompanying fiddle.

Baudelaire described Daumier's method. "He has a wonderful, almost super-human memory, from which he works as from a model." Yet, although the artist was working from imagination rather than direct observation, "his powers of observation are such that in his work we never find a single head that is out of character with the figure beneath it".

Both Baudelaire and Van Gogh admired the vehement energy of Daumier's line. Baudelaire called him the "Michelangelo of Caricature". The hair and beard of the Singing Violinist, crackling with vehemence and energy, illustrate exactly what he meant. So do drawings such as *Two Heads* and *Quatre personnages*, in which each figure is distinct and individual, as if they were characters extracted from some unknown drama.

Perhaps this is no accident. Daumier grew up in a highly theatrical milieu. His father, Jean-Baptiste, was a glazier and picture-framer from Marseilles, before he transformed himself into a poet and playwright and moved to Paris. Although Jean-Baptiste had poems published, and his tragedy *Philippe II* was performed in Paris, he did not make much of an income from writing (which was why young Honoré soon became his family's sole support).

As an artist, Daumier was fascinated by performance – whether that of barristers addressing the court, clowns and acrobats busking in the street, or professional actors on stage. The counterpart to the performance was the audience, which was also a preoccupation of Daumier's. In *At the Theatre*, a group of bourgeois Parisians sit placidly watching the events on stage.

Although Van Gogh bracketed him with Zola, a better literary comparison would be with Daumier's slightly older contemporary, Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) – or, across the Channel, with Charles Dickens (1812-70). Like Balzac, Daumier created a visual *Comédie humaine* encompassing contemporary society, and like Dickens he could summon up extraordinarily memorable figures as much from imagination as from observation. Like both these writers, he looked at Parisian life closely and comprehensively.

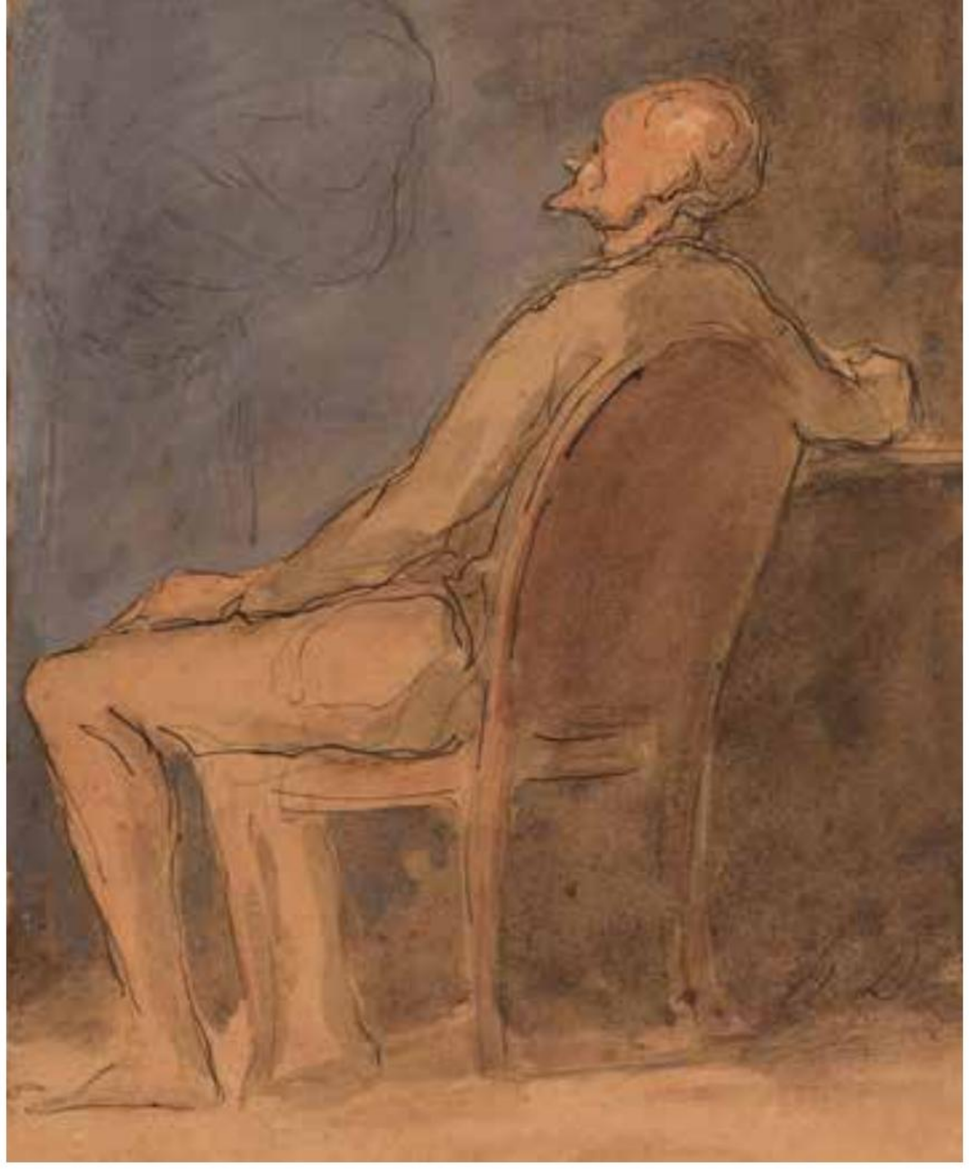
Despite the occasional ferocity of his imagery, in person he seems to have been mild-mannered. Jules Laurens, a fellow artist, called him "physically and morally a kindly lion". Pierre Véron, editor of *Le Charivari*, confessed he "could never understand how Daumier, so assertive, so revolutionary when holding a pencil could be so shy in everyday life".

For many years the artist and his wife, Marie-Alexandrine (known as Didine), lived at 9 quai d' Anjou on the Île Saint-Louis. Beneath their windows, washerwomen did their laundry on the shore of the Seine. These woman were a favourite motif in his work.









**Above left**
Honoré-Victorin Daumier (1808-1879)
*Quatres personnages*
pencil, watercolour, ink
and wash on paper
*8.4 x 17.6cm (3¼ x 7in)*
Estimate: €30,000 - 50,000

**Far left**
Honoré-Victorin Daumier (1808-1879
*Sancho and His Donkey*
brush, wash and ink on paper
*13.5 x 12cm (5 x 4¾in)*
Estimate: €15,000 - 20,000

**Left**
Honoré-Victorin Daumier (1808-1879)
*Avocat et client (L'avocat et le paysan – Défenseur et accuse)*
*15.1 x 15.8cm (6 x 6¼in)*
Estimate: €90,000 - 140,000

**Above**
Honoré-Victorin Daumier (1808-1879)
*Seated Man, seen in profile*
watercolour and ink on paper
*20.8 x 15.8cm (8 x 6¼in)*
Estimate: €25,000 - 35,000

An even more frequent subject was the lawyers who thronged the Palais de Justice on the adjoining, and much grander, Île de la Cité. These were the source for a large subdivision of Daumier's work, including such drawings as *Lawyer & Client* and *The Accusation*.

Daumier's experience of courtrooms and accusations was personal – and painful. In the past, he had stood in the dock, dependant (unavailingly) on the efforts of his counsel. On 30 August 1832, the magazine *La Caricature*, of which the 24-year-old Daumier was a star contributor, carried a dramatic announcement: "At the moment of our writing these lines, M. Daumier, sentenced to six months' imprisonment for the caricature of *Gargantua* was arrested under the eyes of his father and mother, whose sole support he is".

A drawing entitled *Gargantua* had earned him a suspended sentence. In this caricature, the gigantic, gross figure of King Louis-Philippe is seated on a commode while barrels of cash, extracted from the poverty-stricken citizenry, are being rolled up a ramp into his open mouth. Beneath the King, his rotund cronies gather up the honours and privileges he excretes.

Daumier followed this up with a lampoon of Louis-Philippe's court, including an especially unflattering caricature of the chief prosecutor Jean-Charles Persil disguised as a woman. This aggravated second offence got him sent to the prison of Sainte-Pélagie, soon joined by his editor and fellow caricaturist Charles Philipon.

Fellow artists were more appreciative of his work. Camille Pissarro sent his son Lucien a set of ten lithographs, explaining that "Daumier's whole history" was "traced" in them. "One understands well, perusing this book, that Daumier was the man of his drawings, a man of conviction, a true republican."

Van Gogh too was a keen collector of Daumier's lithographs. He enjoyed these so much he felt they served as a substitute painkiller: "Daumier's drawings are so true that they almost make one forget the toothache." Together with his own paintings and some Japanese prints, Daumier's works formed the sole decoration of the austere, whitewashed interior of the Yellow House.

The inside of this dwelling was meant to reflect the outside. His own pictures represented Arles and the Provençal countryside which, somewhat eccentrically, Van Gogh felt resembled Japan (a place he had never seen). When he insisted the scruffy *quartier* around the Yellow House was "pure Daumier", he meant that there he could see the comedy, tragedy, poignancy and meanness of everyday urban life. This was Daumier's true subject.

*Martin Gayford's most recent book is* Venice: City of Pictures.

Sale: Impressionist & Modern Art, London, 18 April at 4pm
Impressionist & Modern Art, Paris, 5 June at 2pm
L'avant-garde à nos jours, Paris, 4 December at 2pm
Enquiries: Bénédicte van Campen +33 1 56 79 12 58
benedicte.vancampen@bonhams.com



**Left**
The artist and Archbishop Nikon, as pictured in the *Toronto Daily Star* on 1 October 1954

**Opposite**
Vladimir Griegorovich Tretchikoff (1913-2006)
*Lost Orchid*, 1948
oil on canvas
Estimate: £150,000 - 200,000 ($190,000 - 250,000)

# The king of kitsch?

## Vladimir Tretchikoff was lucky to survive the war, writes ***Mark Hudson***, but his hyper-realistic art soon won him riches and worldwide fame

A portrait of a Chinese woman, her features a glowing, lustrous turquoise, Vladimir Tretchikoff's *Chinese Girl (The Green Lady)* might be taken, certainly on paper, for a piece of Surrealism. The painting became one of the best known, most controversial and widely reproduced of the 20th century. If this sounds like a case of Salvador Dalí-style visionary hyper-realism meeting Andy Warhol-flavoured mass market manipulation, there is slightly more to it. Tretchikoff's 'masterpiece' achieved its infamy not because of its challenge to mainstream taste, but because the smoothly realistic rendering of the model's features made it all too easily enjoyed by people who 'don't know much about art, but know what they like'.

Seen in reproduction in millions of suburban living rooms, *Chinese Girl* was seen as the epitome of petit-bourgeois, even proletarian, lack of taste. Its Russian-South African creator was the 'king of kitsch'.

Nowadays, of course, such snobbish distinctions don't mean a thing. Anything that challenges the aesthetic orthodoxies of 'educated people' is hailed as subversive, even radical. Tretchikoff's near-hallucinatory images of Africans and Asians might be seen as examples of exoticism and cultural appropriation, but at least he was painting 'non-white people' at a time when racism was endemic throughout Europe, North America and, particularly, the artist's adopted South Africa. Bonhams sold *Chinese Girl* for nearly £1 million at auction in 2013. It would doubtless fetch far more today.

A haunting painting from Tretchikoff's classic late 1940s/early 1950s period that was even closer to its creator's heart was another huge seller in reproduction, and it was a work that was long believed lost.

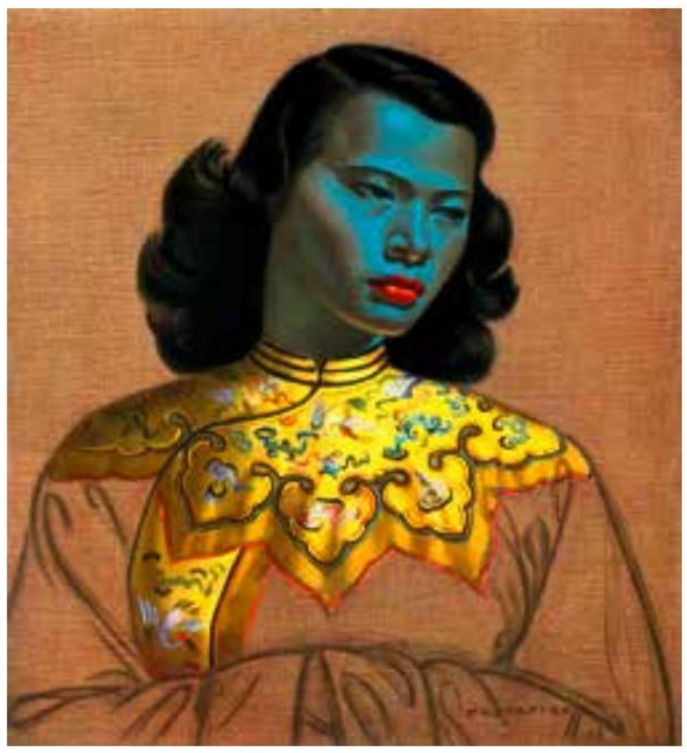
It shows a fragile flower, discarded on a staircase, in eerily vivid detail. Two pearl-like droplets, which might be tears, are on the step below. All is bathed in an unearthly light. One of Tretchikoff's most popular works from the moment it was first exhibited in 1949, *Lost Orchid* has been out of public view since its last sale in 1955.

> "A bare-breasted figure stares at a single orchid, surrounded by erotically charged leaves"

An apparently similar painting emerged in 2009, raising hopes that *Lost Orchid* had been rediscovered, but crucial details revealed it was a different work. Now, however, the original *Lost Orchid* is offered at auction for the first time in Bonhams' Modern & Contemporary African Art sale in London. It highlights many contradictions in the life and art of its creator.


A. TRETCHIKOFF
SA
1948







**Above left**
Vladimir Griegorovich Tretchikoff
*Self-portrait dedicated to Lenka*, 1945
sanguine chalk on paper

**Left**
Vladimir Griegorovich Tretchikoff
*Chinese Girl*, *c*.1954
Sold for £982,050

**Above**
Vladimir Griegorovich Tretchikoff
*Resurrection*, 1953

**Opposite left**
Vladimir Griegorovich Tretchikoff
*Journey's End*, *c*.1950

**Opposite right**
Vladimir Griegorovich Tretchikoff
*Lady of the Orchids*, *c*.1944

Born in 1913 into a Russian landowning family in Petropavlovsk (in modern Kazakhstan), Tretchikoff grew up with a sense of disconnection from the Western mainstream that he was to turn to lucrative creative account. At the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in 1917, his family fled to an even more remote outpost: the Manchurian city of Harbin in the north-east of China, at that time an essentially Russian city, with an Orthodox Cathedral and a Russian opera house, where the young Tretchikoff worked as a scenery painter.

With no formal training, but evidently gifted and patently entrepreneurial, Tretchikoff spent his young adult years moving in a westerly direction around the South-east Asian periphery, picking up work as a designer, illustrator and painter – first in Shanghai.

Tretchikoff was in Singapore, working as a propaganda artist for the British Ministry of Information, when the Second World War broke out – there, in 1940, he married fellow Russian émigré Natalie Telpougoff. His wife and infant daughter were evacuated to South Africa, but the ship following, which carried Tretchikoff and other British government personnel, was hit by a Japanese torpedo.

He and other survivors spent 21 days on the open sea, before arriving, near starved, in Java, which was already under Japanese occupation. Tretchikoff was imprisoned and spent three months in solitary confinement after protesting his neutrality as a 'Soviet citizen'. Eventually released, he was put on parole in Batavia (now Jakarta).

A few days into his new freedom, he spotted an orchid in the street. "Fresh dew drops shone on its leaves, and for me it was as if the flower wept," he recalled many years later. Having lived in China he was alert to the symbolism of flowers. "The orchid represents life. People use it and throw it away, without thinking. That is why it is now abandoned, lost, crying." In the ensuing painting, the flower is captured with a visionary verisimilitude, its petals opened out like some botanical specimen, but sitting right on the edge of a step, as though about to slip on to the one below, where the two teardrops shine like huge pearls.

A safety pin in its stem suggests the flower was a buttonhole, while further up the steps are discarded streamers, the detritus of some party or celebration. The narrative focus has shifted from the feelings of the flower, as described by Tretchikoff, to those of the wearer, who was clearly distressed by the occasion: was it the wedding of a former lover? Did he see the love of his life in the arms of another? And something about the discarded cigarette butt lying nearby suggests that our protagonist, like the painter himself, is a man. In the process of painting, the two tears have been transformed from the flower's tears, as Tretchikoff first imagined them, into the man's tears.

> "He spent 21 days on the open sea, before arriving in Java, already under Japanese occupation"

Shortly after completing the painting, Tretchikoff took delivery of a box of orchids, then exorbitantly expensive – ten times the cost of roses – but with no indication of the who sent them. For a few months, he received orchids twice a week – so many that they filled his house. Yet the florist who delivered them refused to give the name of the sender. Tretchikoff was at once mystified and profoundly touched. "Somebody evidently had faith in me," he remembered. "And it grew to mean so much, when all around was desolation, poverty and suffering."



He painted a fantasy portrait of his mysterious benefactor, whom he imagined – unsurprisingly – as a woman. Painted in a theatrical expressionistic style, *Lady of the Orchids* shows a beautiful, bare-breasted figure staring at a single orchid, surrounded by large red-tinged leaves that, under Tretchikoff's fervent brush, feel erotically charged.

The model was Tretchikoff's lover Leonora Schmidt-Salomonson, known as Lenka, a half-Indonesian, half-Dutch woman.

In 1946, he was reunited with his wife and daughter in South Africa, where he painted the final and definitive version of *Lost Orchid*, bought by John Schlesinger, owner of the advertising agency where he worked.

Tretchikoff soon had little need of a day job, as his profile as a painter rocketed with successful exhibitions in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and an invitation – in 1952 – to create a touring exhibition in America.

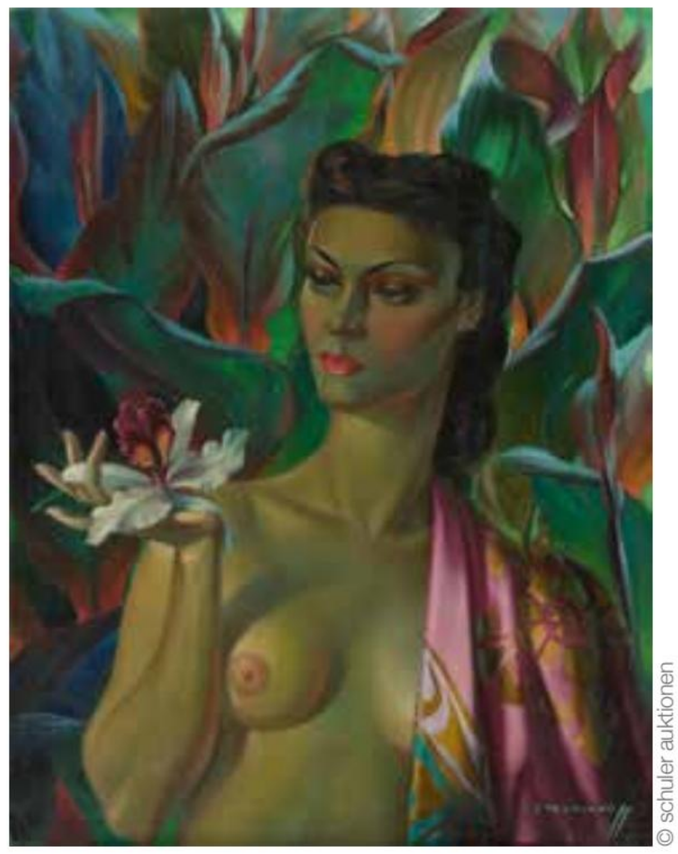
He asked Schlesinger to lend the painting for the tour. Vast crowds – 57,000 in LA, 52,000 in San Francisco – turned out to see his paintings, with *Lost Orchid* one of the most discussed. Tretchikoff persuaded Schlesinger to sell the painting back to him, at three times the price Schlesinger had paid. Eventually, it was sold on to the Hollywood actor Mark Dawson. He was initially unable to afford the hefty asking price, but by the time *Lost Orchid* had spent another three years on a protracted world tour, Dawson had managed to save the required sum. The painting has remained with his family ever since.

A 1961 exhibition at Harrods in London saw more than 200,000 people turn out to see *Chinese Girl* (actually the daughter of a Cape Town laundry owner), *Miss Wong*, *Balinese Girl* and *Zulu Girl* in all their blue and green-tinged glory. Tretchikoff was now, after Picasso, the second-richest artist in the world, but retained a chippy attitude towards critics. Most, he reckoned, were "failed artists", while his "symbolic realism" was truly loved by real people.

By the late 1990s, taste was shifting. New generations of artists and viewers saw delicious irony in Tretchikoff's 'transgressive' exoticism, which did not entirely please the artist himself. He died in 2006, bemused at the idea that there was anything ironic in his passionate people's art.

*Mark Hudson is the Art Critic of* The Independent.

Sale: Modern & Contemporary African Art
New Bond Street, London
27 March at 3pm
Enquiries: Giles Peppiatt +44 (0) 20 7468 8355
giles.peppiatt@bonhams.com



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## I know what I like

### Wayne Hemingway *in praise of the overlooked and undervalued*

Growing up in Morecambe with a Nan who loved to fill the house with 'exotica' and mass-market artworks that she bought from Woolworths and the Freemans catalogue, I never paid much notice to this 'green lady' that peered down from her position above the mantelpiece. But when Nan sadly died and it was time sort out her belongings, I couldn't bear to get rid of the 'green lady' and I took it down to my rented flat in London. As my wife and I built our fledgling Red or Dead brand in Kensington Market in the early '80s, funded by selling second-hand clothes on Camden Market, we kept coming across these 'green ladies' at almost every jumble sale and second-hand shop we went to, and we bought every 'green lady' and every artwork in the same vein, very rarely paying more than £5 for them. I ended up with more than a thousand mass-market artworks, and eventually was asked to publish the book *Just above the Mantelpiece*. During the research for the book, I enjoyed finding out about Vladimir Tretchikoff, the artist behind the enigmatic 'green lady', which is today one of the world's most recognisable artworks. Tretchikoff, consciously or not, spat in the face of elitism in the art world. Before he decided to mass-produce his prints in 1952, the wealthy would pay significant sums for his originals. Their prices fitted the investment economy of high-brow culture. However, within two years of the paintings being reproduced in print form, Tretchikoff became relegated to 'low-brow' status. In fact, Tretchikoff's decision to reproduce his prints was arguably one of the most democratic moments in the history of modern art. It transformed the relationship between artist and purchaser into one between artist and a 100,000 purchasers every time a print was put on sale. *The Lost Orchid* is one of the best known and best-selling of the tens of millions of Tretchikoff prints that have circulated and are still circulating around the world's cooler living rooms, bars and vintage stores. But, as always seems to be the case with this artist, controversy has surrounded this painting in the past: back in 2009, discrepancies (including the positioning of a teardrop on a petal and the presence of a burnt match) surfaced between *The Last Orchid* and an image published in Howard Timmins's 1969 book *Tretchikoff*. It took forensic testing to prove the painting's authenticity. **W.H.**






The National Gallery, London

# Heavens above

## Astronomy, meteorology, prophecy – the astrolabe had answers to all sorts of questions, says ***Laura Poppick***

As we go about swiping our smartphones each day, we may feel as if we are participating in a uniquely modern experience. With the quick flick of our fingers, we can learn what time it is, what the weather may hold for the week, and how to navigate to our next destination. Never before has so much information been so readily available at our fingertips. Right?

In a certain way, that's true. But centuries before the dawn of smartphones, humans were swiping through a different type of handheld device to gather some of the same types of information that we seek from our phones today. These earlier humans were not staring at LED screens but at astrolabes, analogue devices composed of layered discs and other swivelling features that offered information based on the position of stars in the sky.

Loosely translating as 'star-taker' in Greek, the astrolabe first appeared in the Roman Empire sometime around the 2nd century AD, and spread to the Islamic world by the 8th century. They remained in use up until the 17th and 18th centuries, when newer technologies like modern clocks and sextants became more reliable and made astrolabes obsolete.

In their heyday, these circular instruments met a whole suite of needs ranging from scientific to religious to mundane day-to-day decision-making. Some Europeans relied on them when strategising around things such as personal finances and military tactics, based on the position of stars in the zodiac. Astrology held more sway during parts of the Middle Ages than it does today. In the Islamic world, the device helped determine the time and direction of daily prayer called for within the Quran.

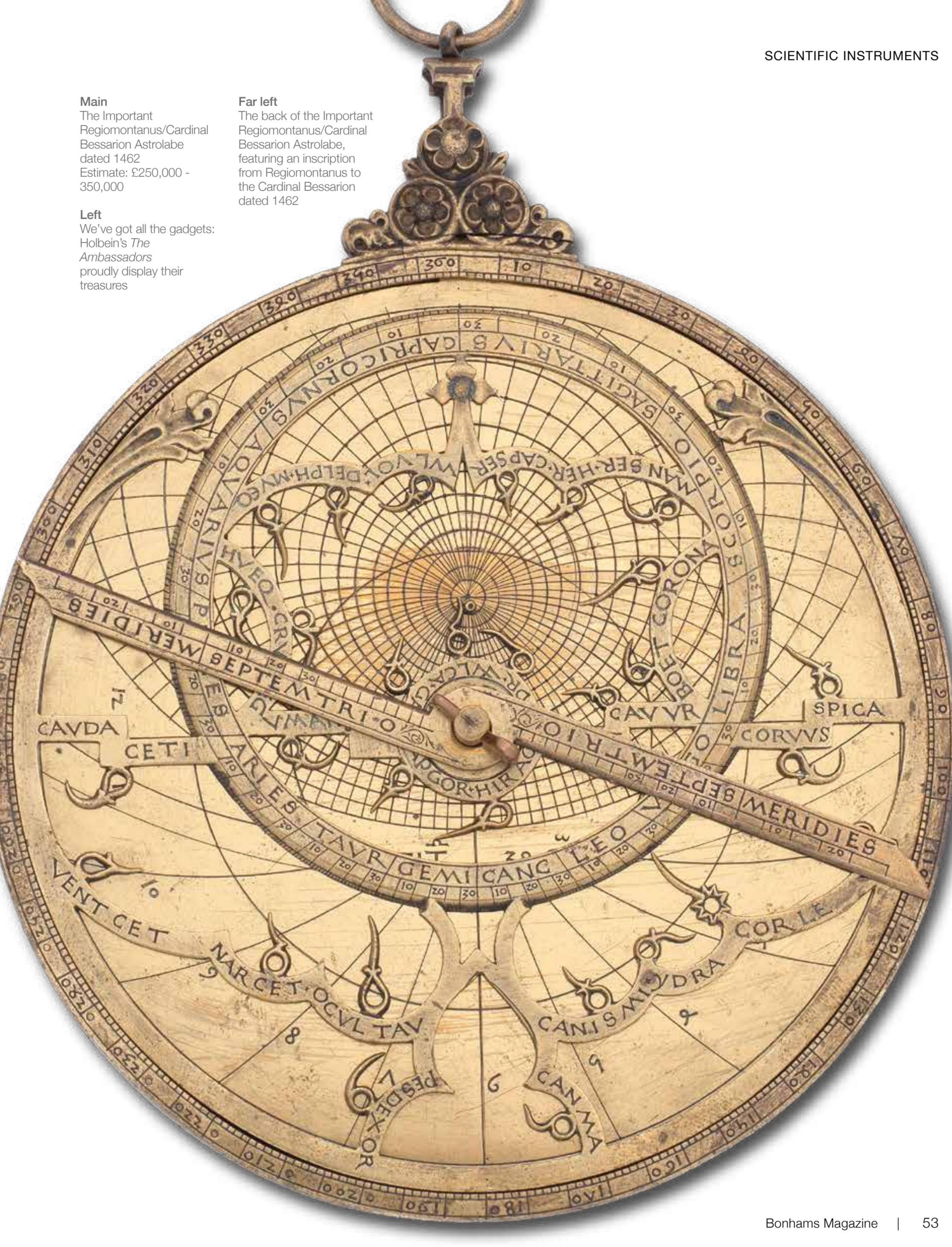
> "Earlier humans were not staring at LED screens but at astrolabes..."

To use an astrolabe, you might first begin by looking through a pinhole on the back of the instrument to find a familiar star in the night sky. From there, you could determine the star's altitude and carry on with additional calculations on the front of the device, where

**Main**
The Important Regiomontanus/Cardinal Bessarion Astrolabe dated 1462
Estimate: £250,000 - 350,000

**Far left**
The back of the Important Regiomontanus/Cardinal Bessarion Astrolabe, featuring an inscription from Regiomontanus to the Cardinal Bessarion dated 1462

**Left**
We've got all the gadgets: Holbein's *The Ambassadors* proudly display their treasures






Plantin-Moretus Museum, Antwerp

a round plate with a two-dimensional projection of Earth's latitudinal lines sat layered with other rotating features. Because the position of stars shifts depending on the geographic location from which you view them, astrolabes often came with a collection of several different plates, each representative of the latitude of a different major city.

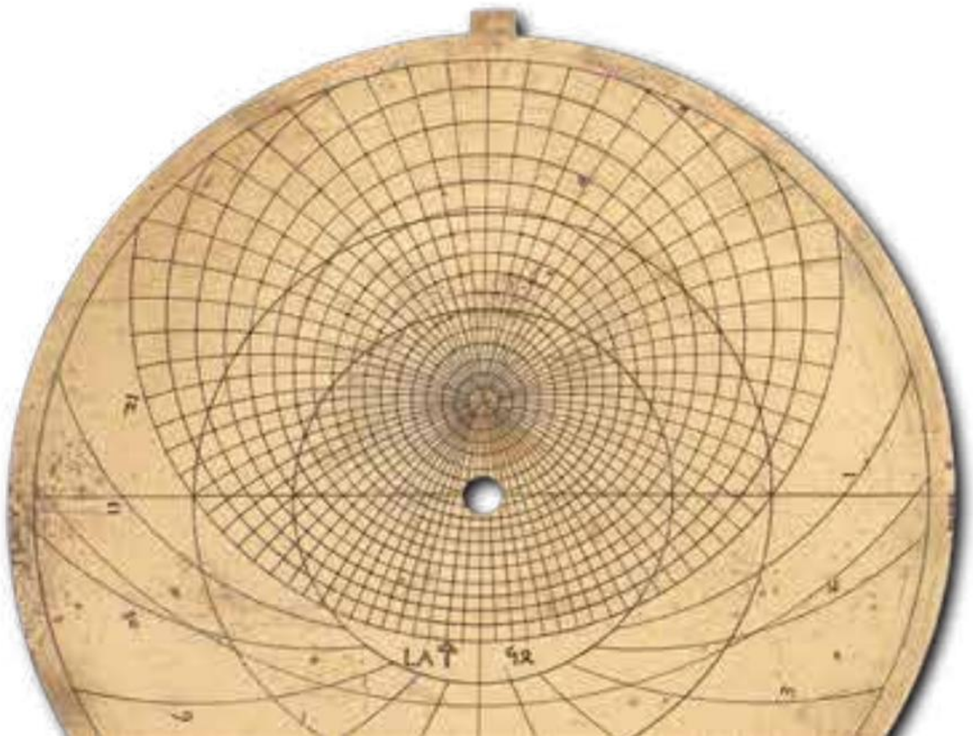
Sometimes constructed of wood, sometimes of metal, these versatile instruments ranged in size from as small as a coaster to as large as a bicycle wheel, depending on their intended use. Some were ornate and decorative – a sign of wealth or status not unlike a Rolex today – but others were plain and utilitarian. "For every fancy one, there were probably many more that were functional," says Alexander Jones, a researcher at New York University who specialises in ancient astronomy.

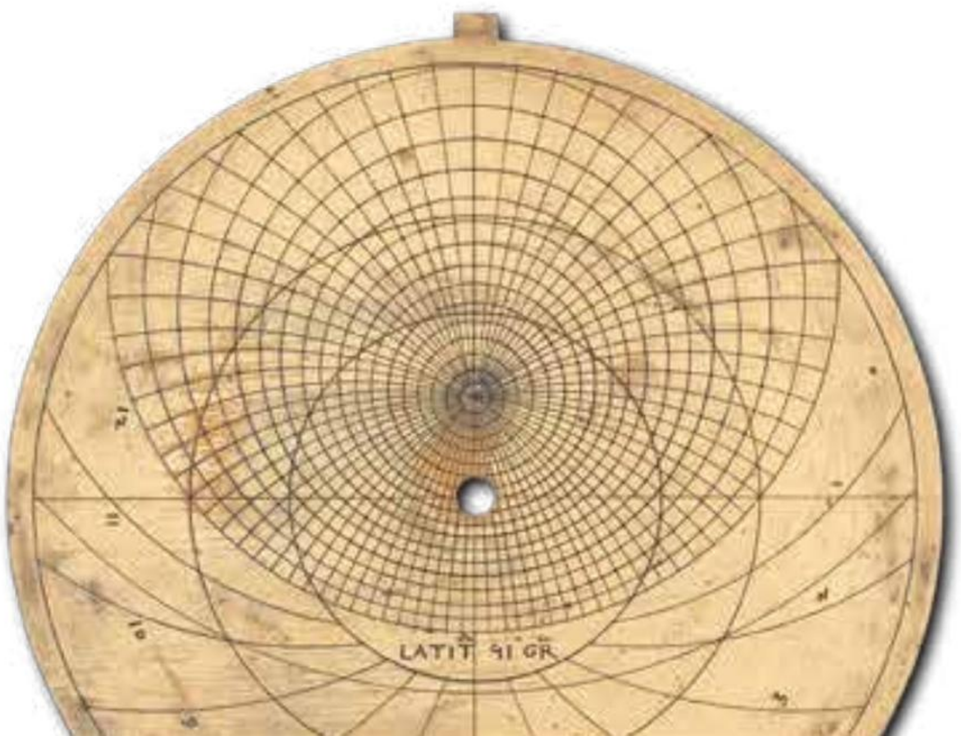
More often than not, the higher-quality astrolabes are the ones that survive to the present day, since poorer quality devices have long since been recycled or decayed, says Jones. Many mariners' astrolabes that have made it into modern collections were gathered from

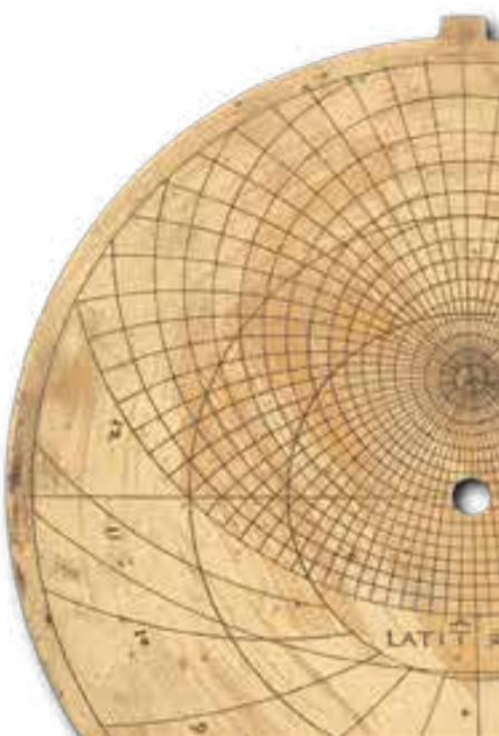
## "Many astrolabes were gathered from shipwrecks off the western coast of Ireland"

Spanish and Portuguese shipwrecks off the western coast of Ireland. Beyond these physical remnants, we also find traces of these instruments in works of fine art, including Vermeer's *The Astronomer* (*c.*1668) and Paolo Veronese's *Allegory of Navigation with an Astrolabe: Ptolemy* (1557), which depicts the famous Greek astronomer grasping a frisbee-sized astrolabe with both hands.

The Regiomontanus/Bessarion Astrolabe (1462), which is to be offered in Bonhams' Instruments of Science and Technology sale, has a rich history. Built in Rome under the patronage of Cardinal Bessarion (1403-72), it passed through the hands of other esteemed European figures in the following centuries, including





Louvre Museum, Paris

**Opposite**
Jan Collaert II (c. 1561-1620) after Jan van der Straet (c.1523-1605) *Amerigo Vespucci: The use of the astrolabe*, circa 1589

**Above**
Staring at the stars: Vermeer's *The Astronomer*, 1668

**Right**
Paolo Caliari Veronese (1528-1588) *Allegory of Navigation with an Astrolabe*, circa 1560



LACMA, Los Angeles

renowned Scottish mathematician and astronomer Mary Somerville (1780-1872), who worked as a scientist and science writer more than a century before such positions were readily available to women. Her two-volume textbook *Physical Geography* (1848), the first of its kind to be published in English, was widely referenced for at least half a century after she wrote it.

Somerville and her husband William gave the astrolabe to their friend John Herschel (1792-1871), polymath and dedicatee of *Physical Geography*. The device passed from Herschel to a few others before arriving at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich in 1958, where it remained until the 1980s.

Though the use of these intricate instruments has been superseded in the 21st century, their beauty and intrigue live on. They still offer valuable information about our time and place in the universe, reminding us that what we consider purely modern is often just something reimagined from the past.

*Laura Poppick writes on science and the environment. Her book* Strata *will be published by W.W. Norton.*

Sale: Instruments of Science and Technology
Knightsbridge, London
24 April at 1pm
Enquiries: Jon Baddeley +44 (0) 20 7393 3872
jon.baddeley@bonhams.com

## Star quality

*The Regiomontanus/Bessarion Astrolabe tells as much about the 15th century as it does the heavens, says* Hannele Hellerstedt

With its inscription: "Under the protection of the divine Bessarion on whom all can be said to depend I arise in Rome the work of John 1462", the Regiomontanus/Cardinal Bessarion astrolabe was a testament to patronage between a young German humanist and an older Greek bibliophile.

Johannes Bessarion entered the order of St Basil at an early age. He was created a Cardinal-priest by Pope Eugenius IV in 1439 and soon became a champion for the reunification of the Greek and Roman churches, becoming Patriarch of Constantinople in 1463. Johann Müller (1436-76), later known as Regiomontanus, was a student at the University of Vienna, where, under the tutelage of astronomer Georg Peurbach, he entered Bessarion's circle in May 1460. The present astrolabe was one of his early works.

The rete (map of the sky) of the astrolabe marks the position of 30 named stars. There are three plates that can be exchanged. Each plate, or tympan, is specific to a particular latitude, one of which was marked specifically for Rome, showing that city's importance to Bessarion.

The present astrolabe is engraved in a humanist Roman script characteristic of the 15th century, but it retains traces of the preceding Gothic era, particularly in the use of the quatrefoil motif and in the forms of the numerals 4, 5 and 7. Only one of five dated astrolabes of this type in the world, the Regiomontanus/Bessarion model is a direct link to a period of scientific and spiritual transition in European culture. **H.H.**


FLAMBERT
ALCOHOL
NOEL COWARD
Let's Eat
Beaton
LADYS
CHANEL
PRINCE PHILIP
PRINCESS MARGARET
Snowdon
SNOWDON
Diana Princess of Wales
MARGARET
MARGARET A Love Story
Elizabeth R
HEATH AND THE BANKS
PAIN: WHO NEEDS IT?
THE QUEEN
Weinberg
ARMAND HAMMER
C.O.M.E. BEATON






# Letting go

*Hugo Vickers* was a compulsive collector of royal memorabilia. He has now taken a deep breath. The sale is coming up in May

Portrait by *Oliver Williams*

**Opposite**
Hugo Vickers pictured alongside a Prince of Wales Investiture Chair, designed by Lord Snowdon in 1969
Estimate: £1,200 - 1,800 ($1,500 - 2,500)

**Left**
Sir Cecil Beaton (1904-1980)
*A portrait of the Duchess of Windsor*
ink wash with watercolour
Estimate: £10,000 - 15,000 ($15,000 - 20,000)

The collecting bug strikes early. First, for me, were cereal packets with cardboard animals that you cut out and constructed. I got most of them, but thinking back there was a single elusive one and I now wonder if the manufacturers only made a few of them, or maybe none at all, so that we children went on demanding more and more packets until we got it – and we never did.

I was interested in the Royal Family from my earliest days, which was considered bizarre in some ways. I remember my mother being cross when I wanted a Pitkin *Royal Line of Succession*: "Why are you interested in that sort of thing?" It was therefore with some hesitation that I confessed to my parents that I had bought James Pope-Hennessy's biography of Queen Mary for 15 shillings in a second-hand bookshop in Windsor. That was the afternoon of Churchill's state funeral in January 1965. I was 13. This time they appeared rather interested.

"There is no greater excitement than bidding for something you desperately want, especially if you can only just afford it"

The floodgates opened, and I have been buying books ever since (four within the last 24 hours). It was a challenge to collect *Whitaker's Almanacks*. I used to carry around a card with the missing ones listed, so that I could seek them in second-hand bookshops, but when the internet came along, it was easy to complete the set. I now have consecutive *Almanacks* from 1907 to 2014, the earliest dated 1878, and very useful they are in my work for contemporary information.

I longed for items with royal association. At school, I tried to buy a Christmas card signed by the Queen, from a boy whose father was her chaplain. His parents weren't having that. But I had better luck aged 16, when one of the Queen Mother's pages parted company with her 1967 Christmas card for £5 (he doesn't like being reminded of this). I still have it, and I hate to confess I have a safe full of other such cards, including ones sent by the Queen and the Queen Mother to the Duke of Windsor.

The excitement of finding an elusive book is intense. In 1984, my hand darted out to grab a copy of Nicky Mariano's *Forty Years with Berenson*. It was in a shop in Hay-on-Wye, priced 75p, and there was nobody else nearby, but I was taking no chances. All collectors have their mad moments of luck: a copy of Lady Cynthia



**Above**
Cecil Beaton (1904-1980)
*A portrait of Katharine Hepburn as Coco Chanel*
ink wash with watercolour
Estimate: £800 - 1,200
($1,000 - 1,500)



**Right**
'I use them as dining room chairs': a pair of King George VI limed-oak Coronation Chairs, 1937
Estimate: £700 - 1,000
($1,000 - 1,500)

Asquith's diaries with the name 'Nancy Rodd' in the front turned up in Shakespeare and Company in Paris in 1981 – I knew that was Nancy Mitford. Then there was the time I strayed on another Pope-Hennessy *Queen Mary*, inscribed to the present Duke of Gloucester from his aunt, the Princess Royal, in a Gloucester Road bookshop. (I think he had three more copies at home.) Not everyone would have recognised the Princess Royal's handwriting.

I have travelled far and wide to buy them. In 1980, I sat in a freezing marquee in Rottingdean (rain pouring down outside) to scoop up 400 of Enid Bagnold's books for £100. Among them was a first edition of Proust, which emerged from the box like an unexploded bomb. I was happier than another man that day, who found he had bought several hundred copies of the frankly unreadable memoirs of Sir Roderick Jones, director of Reuters.

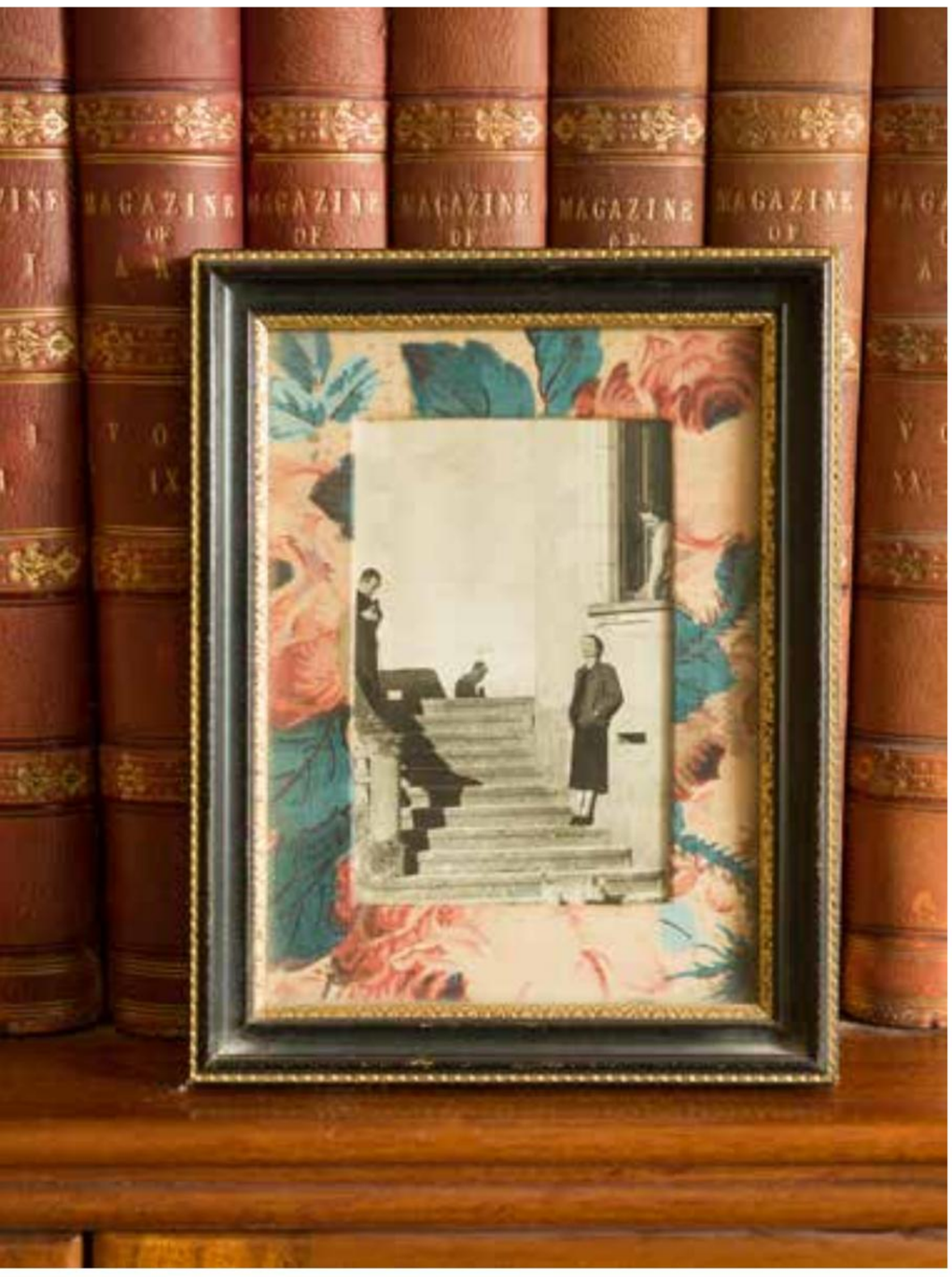
In 1979, Sir Cecil Beaton asked me to become his official biographer. I had two lunches with him at his Wiltshire home, the second being on 15 January 1980. Two days later he died, so I only got to know him posthumously, working in his house with his secretary, talking to his friends and reading his copious papers. I am now his literary executor. Being surrounded by beautiful things made me interested in pictures. At the famous sale at his house in the summer after he died, I got everything I wanted at the maximum price I was prepared to pay for it. There is no greater excitement than bidding for something you desperately want, especially if you can only just afford it. In my experience you only regret the ones that get away, and anything you buy, however expensive, becomes excellent value with the passing of time.

The problem is that eventually you can't move. The house is full, so it is time to say goodbye to two Investiture Chairs I bought at the time the current King was made Prince of Wales (1969). I was secretary of the school heraldry society and a speaker, Peter Spurrier, alerted me to them. A boy in my house, Tom Vesey, was going to the ceremony (I was so envious – A-level revision was my lot). He was the nephew of Lord Snowdon, who

"The book was inscribed to the present Duke of Gloucester from his aunt, the Princess Royal"

was running the show. The chairs come apart. Only the VIPs actually sat in the chairs with legs –most of the guests sat on the seats with backs attached to long rows like benches. Guests could buy them after the ceremony – as can you, since they are among my treasures to be offered in Bonhams' Collections sale this spring.

I am letting a few Coronation chairs go, too. At most Coronations, these are specially commissioned for the guests at Westminster Abbey, so all Coronation chairs have played their part in proceedings, bearing the monarch's cypher. Again, distinguished guests could buy them afterwards, so you see them in many stately homes







**Above**
A photograph of Cecil Beaton with the Duchess of Windsor, taken by Beaton's assistant
Estimate: £300 - 500 ($400 - 650)

**Right**
A collection of original photographs from the 20th century, whose sitters include King Edward VI
Estimate: £200 - 1,300 ($250 - 1,500)

across Britain. Mine come from George VI's Coronation in 1937 and the Queen's in 1953 – chairs and also stools. Altogether I have 15, which I use as dining room chairs, since they were designed for people to sit in comfort for hours in extremely uncomfortable clothes. Some rather nice copies were made as replicas for the Silver Jubilee in 1977 (I have five of the smart copies at home, and there is one in the royal pew at the chapel at Royal Lodge).

The Cecil Beaton picture of the Duchess of Windsor is one of four existing from the day he spent sketching her in London on 20 November 1936. The Duchess had two in her house in Paris, sold for £97,696 and £73,368 respectively in the 1998 Sotheby's sale in New York, and the other was bought privately by a Londoner. In 1983, I took Lady Diana Cooper to an exhibition of Beaton's pictures. She looked at this one and said: "Not that anyone would be interested, but that is exactly how Wallis used to stand." On the strength of that, I bought it.

The goblet was given to me on my 21st birthday. It is particularly special since it contains a silver coin showing Edward VIII actually wearing his crown, which of course he never did. And the little picture of Beaton photographing the Duchess the day before her 1937 wedding came from his collection at Reddish House.

I wonder how often Edward VII posed in a house party group or for a shooting party before heading off with his gun? One of the pictures illustrates the point made by the Duke of Windsor in his memoirs as to how royal visits needed to change. In Edwardian times, the King did no more than be driven to a town in a carriage for an engagement. He did not even get out of his carriage. He simply sat there, listened to some mayoral speech, snipped a ribbon to open something, and was driven back to Knowsley or wherever, to his sybaritic life and to his girlfriends. The Duke of Windsor deeply disapproved.

*Hugo Vickers has written biographies of Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and Sir Cecil Beaton.*

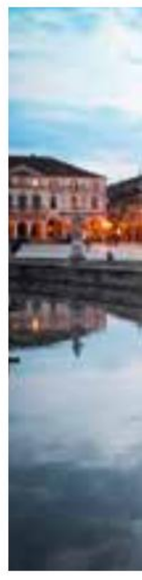
Sale: Collections
Online, London
29 April-8 May, starting at 12pm
Enquiries: Charlie Thomas
+44 (0) 20 7468 8358
charlie.thomas@bonhams.com



# Room of her own







**Left**
Lost and found: An aerial view of St Anthony's Basilica in Padua

**Below**
The local's Venice: The canals of Chioggia

**Opposite clockwise from right**
Worth the wait: Giotto's frescos in the Scrovegni Chapel; The central hall of Villa Foscari; Villa Foscari aka La Malcontenta; The meadow without grass: Padua's Prato della Valle is one of the largest squares in Europe

Lost without accommodation for the Venice Biennale, *Lucinda Bredin* found herself amid the glories of Padua

There was one year at the Venice Biennale when I had nowhere to sleep. Pre-internet, pre-mobile, when arrangements went botch, there was a massive problem. And obviously, this being the busiest time in Venice, there was no room at the inn – any inn. Not even the fly-blown B&Bs off the Strada Nova near the station. Hell, I thought. But since I was near the station on this increasingly fruitless quest, I thought what if I stay somewhere else than Venice? Somewhere that isn't full of the tote-bag touting art crowd which had hatefully booked their rooms a year ago. I stared at the departure boards for inspiration: Bologna? Verona? Ah, Padua.

Padua is 45 minutes from Venice, but, as they say, it's a whole different solar system. The seat of one of the oldest universities in Italy, it's filled with bicycling students, medieval marketplaces, small streets, large churches. On that trip, I used Padua as a dormitory: I stayed near the station for a couple of nights shuttling back and forth to Venice, before a friend said there was a spare floor in his *palazzo*.

This time, I decided that I would make Padua and the surrounding area the focus for a journey through the Veneto.

The reason Padua is a destination is the Scrovegni Chapel, the casket for Giotto's narrative frescoes of the *Life of Christ* and the *Life of the Virgin Mary*. I did swing by to see it on that previous stopover – in those far-off days, one paid a hundred lire and walked in. These days, it's more like booking – and taking – a flight. The chapel is set in its own grounds, cordoned off from the monastery (now a museum) to which it's attached. You enter a departure lounge and watch a bad film about the restoration of the fresco for about 15 long minutes, so that your presence, along with the other 40 or so pilgrims who have come to pay homage, can acclimatise itself to the sealed atmosphere. Only then you can go in.

Giotto completed the decoration for the chapel in 1305. It served as a private oratory and funerary monument for the banker Enrico Scrovegni, noted in *The Inferno* as a usurer. The frescoes are arranged on four tiers, from a band of the virtues and deadly sins at eyeline to a starry ceiling in celestial blue, with three

> "This being the busiest time in Venice, there was no room at the inn – any inn"

levels of storyboards, containing some of the most famous images in art. The aggressive lunge towards Christ by Judas, snatching a kiss, for example, contrasts with the poignant embrace between Joachim and Anne, the Virgin's parents – one of the earliest representations of a kiss in art. This is not something one can even begin to see in the allotted 15 minutes – so pay to book a double slot. And you may get lucky: we were allowed to stay in the chapel on our own for five glorious minutes before the next lot of visitors came in.

The arcaded streets in the centre of Padua wind through the ghetto and a series of piazzas – one of which houses the Palazzo della Ragione, fabled as having the largest roof unsupported by columns in Europe, which covers a shouty food hall. The other great site is the Basilica of St Anthony, patron saint of Padua and lost property. Its Byzantine-cum-Romanesque with a hint of Gothic exterior contrasts with the Baroque marble









extravaganza to honour the bones of the saint himself, whose miracles – one of which is marvellously named the 'Miracle of the Stingy Man's Heart' – are celebrated in reliefs by Tullio Lombardo.

Padua is a great springboard to see the surrounding Veneto. One way is to take a trip on a *burchiello* – a flat-bottomed boat – along the Brenta Canal to see the country villas of the Venetian nobility. One of the most famous is Villa Foscari (aka La Malcontenta – one of the Foscari wives was locked up by her equally discontented husband). Built by Palladio in 1558, it sits on a raised podium with steep steps ascending to a series of glorious frescoed rooms. It is open to the public, with the ticket office on occasion manned by the chatelaine herself.

There are all the other Venetian villas to see along the canal – Villa Pisani, Villa Widmann, Foscarini Rossi – or one can catch a bus to Chioggia, on the south side of the Venetian lagoon. This small promontory is where Italians go to experience Venice without the crowds. Forming the southern base of an arc of islands that face La Serenissima, Chioggia has churches, canals, a beach – Sottomarina – fabulous fish restaurants and lots of Airbnbs, which usually come with bicycles that can be loaded on to *vaporetti* to islands such as Pellestrina for swimming on empty sandy beaches.

The 60th Venice Biennale opens this April. The title of the international section of the show is, appropriately enough, *Stranieri Ovunque* ('Foreigners Everywhere'). And indeed there will be. This time, I have booked an apartment in the Dorsoduro, so I won't be looking at the departure board at Santa Lucia, the Venetian train station. But hey, if things don't work out, I'll happily go back to Padua.

*Lucinda Bredin is Editor of* Bonhams Magazine.



# When in Padua…

**Where to stay:**

I'm not sure I would recommend Padua Suites C20, which is where I stayed. It was as antiseptic as its name, but it has one huge selling point: it has a direct view on to the Basilica of St Anthony and Donatello's bronze equestrian statue of the *condottiere* Erasmo da Narni, aka Gattamelata ('the Honeyed Cat'). For this view, I forgave everything. I've always given hotels with names such as Hotel Majestic a wide berth, on the grounds that they rarely are. However, Hotel Majestic Toscanelli (below) is just fine. It has large rooms, helpful staff and a marvellous location in the Ghetto. For a more characterful stay, there is the three-room B&B in the 14th-century Massimago Wine Tower, (above) which is owned by a winemaker, and surrounded by a lovely garden. Tours of the vineyards are an optional extra.



**Where to eat:**

There are Michelin restaurants and then there is Le Calandre, the three-star temple in nearby Rubano. This is owned and run by the Alajmo family, and has all the tropes of a gastro destination: muted lighting, tasting menu, a signature dish (cuttlefish cappuccino), and a staggeringly

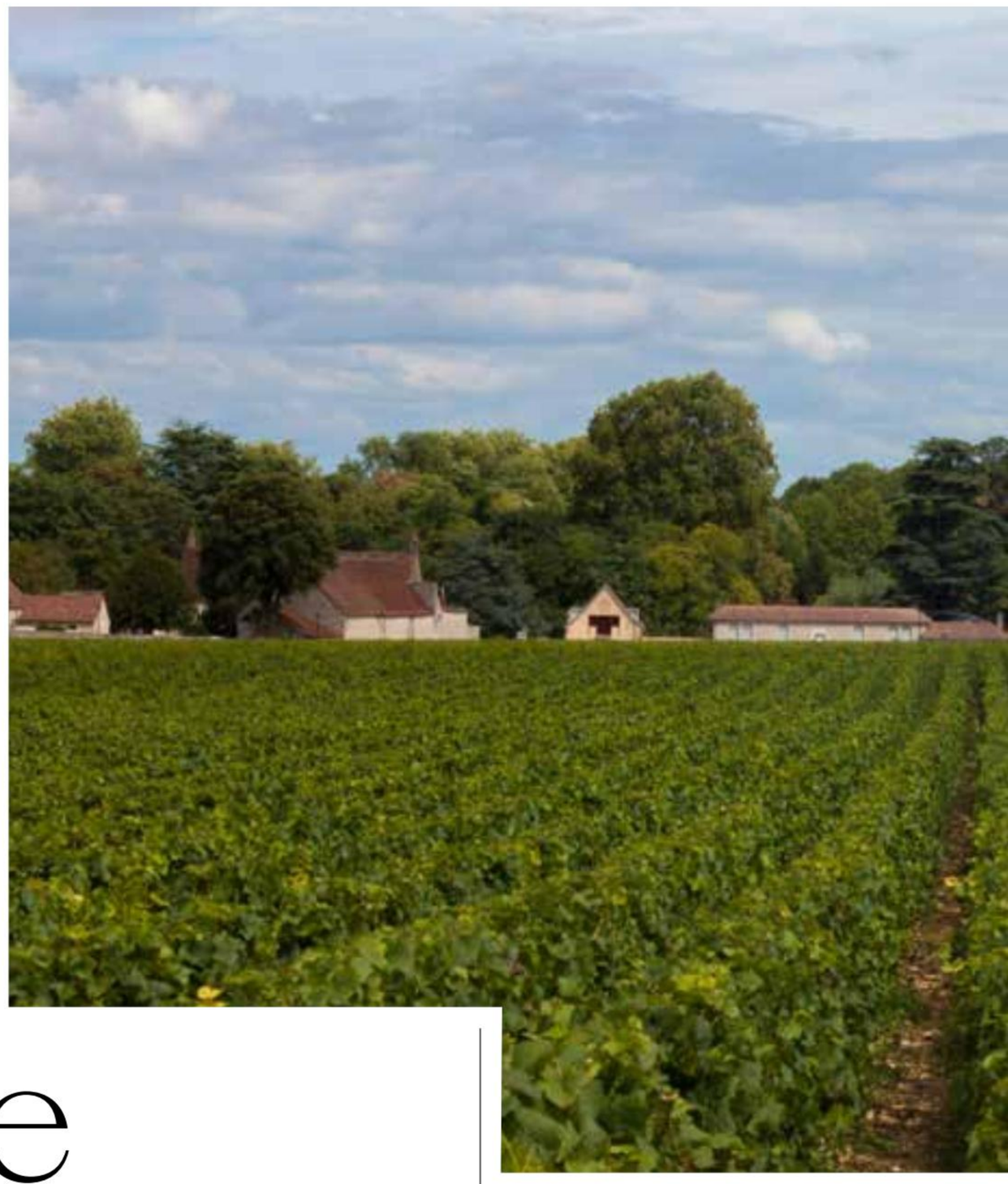


enormous bill. Exquisite. Once away from those lofty heights, Padua isn't somewhere that does mid-range particularly well. There are many old-fashioned restaurants with picturesque settings under the arcades – and your crystal ball will be as good there as mine. Osteria l'Anfora prides itself on its *cucina della nonna* – think wooden tables, shelves of books, huge plates of pasta, excellent tiramisu. Nearby, one can also put together a picnic from the stalls in the open-air market in Piazza delle Erbe. Two covered arcades, called the Salone, are lined with delicatessens specialising in preserved meats – salami and prosciutto – Parmesan cheese, salt cod and fresh pasta.

If you listened to the Venice Biennale crowd, you would think Aperol spritz was invented for and by them. It was not. It originated in Padua – and the done thing is to order one at the 18th-century Caffè Pedrocchi, (below) a neo-classical establishment that allegedly never closes. L.B.







# Fine and rare

**Christian Holthausen** talks to Jancis Robinson M.W. and Amayès Aouli, Bonhams' new Global Head of Wine & Spirits, about a wine tasting that showcases the glories of Burgundy

**Above left to right**
Amayès Aouli, Bonhams Global Head of Wine & Spirits; Burgundy: home to more than 3,000 wine producers; Jancis Robinson M.W. celebrated wine critic & writer

When Gérard Basset died in 2019, he was recognised as the World's Best Sommelier – having long since become a Master of Wine and Master Sommelier. In New York this May, Bonhams is collaborating with the foundation set up in his name to host a tasting with Burgundy as a focus with two of the great names in the wine industry: Jancis Robinson M.W. and Amayès Aouli.

*Why is this partnership with the Gérard Basset Foundation significant for Bonhams?*
**Amayès**: Gérard Basset was a remarkable person, and the foundation carrying his name plays an incredible role in promoting diversity and inclusion in the industry. It was important to me that my first major event since being appointed Global Head of Wines & Spirits for Bonhams was one devoted to charity in the wine world. It is an amazing legacy to help carry on.
**Jancis**: I am proud to be a trustee of the GBF, as I was a friend, supporter and huge admirer of this exceptional man. I have long campaigned for greater diversity of personnel in the wine world – both in terms of those who work in it, and those who consume this magic liquid. So the aims of the Foundation truly align with mine.

*Why Burgundy as the region of focus for this tasting?*
**Jancis**: Burgundy is the most luxurious, sensual and intriguing wine in the world. In fact, it was a 1959 Chambolle-Musigny, Les Amoureuses, which lit the flame for me and started me out on my nearly 50-year career as a wine writer. Just one sniff, and I realised there was a beautiful combination of intellectual stimulation and sensual pleasure in the glass.
**Amayès**: Burgundy is home to more than 3,000 wine producers, 1,247 distinct climates and, of course, many vintages. As one of the most prestigious and complex wine regions in the world, it offers infinite opportunities to enrich your understanding of fine wine. Having the pleasure to hear about Burgundy from Jancis, one of the very best wine writers, is a dream for every wine lover – no matter what stage of their journey they have reached.

*Why are the great wines of Burgundy appreciated by so many people all over the world?*
**Jancis**: Probably partly because they are made in such tiny quantities, so the greater wines of Burgundy truly are rarities – special treats that few of us, even us wine professionals, get to taste frequently.
**Amayès**: Burgundy is perhaps the most *terroir*-conscious wine region in the world. It offers an incredible range of



Photo Credit: Sylvain Brison



flavours, aromas and experiences. Many Burgundy vineyards are relatively small and family-owned, so production is limited. That means the wines – particularly the great Burgundies – become real rarities that are highly sought-after. On top of that, our collective taste has shifted, with people looking to drink wines with finesse and elegance.

*What are some of the changes that you have seen in Burgundy recently?*

Jancis: There is a dramatic shift happening in Burgundy today, with a new generation taking charge in many a cellar. When I started out, it was common for *vignerons* simply to do exactly what their parents (almost always their fathers) had done. They hardly travelled outside their village. Today's Burgundy producers have studied the principles of viticulture and oenology and, importantly, have first-hand experience of other wine regions, often on the other side of the world. Their wines today benefit from a combination of Burgundy's centuries of tradition together with deep-seated, international experience. Some of the earliest adopters of organic and biodynamic methods in the vineyard were Burgundians, and the wines from this part of France are some of the most truly hand-crafted in the world. We visitors love the way that, unlike in so many other famous wine regions, producers get their hands and boots dirty.

Amayès: I absolutely agree with Jancis. Burgundy wines now have a significant influence on winemaking around the world. The region's focus on *terroir*, its meticulous vineyard management and detailed attention to winemaking and innovation have inspired winemakers globally. The region is evolving rapidly too, in part due to the prices of the wines (and consequently the land), which have recently skyrocketed. This carries contradictory sentiments for the great winemaking families of Burgundy, from the joy in seeing their wines internationally recognised to the fear of losing part of their soul. The balance is a subtle one. Perhaps the most striking aspect of all this evolution, though, is that Burgundy maintains a consistent quality, which is impressive.

*Is there anything specific or personal you would like to say about Burgundy?*

Jancis: Just that I can't wait to share these treasures with American connoisseurs under the auspices of an ambitious new entrant in the New York wine auction scene.

Amayès: This is a region close to my heart (and to my palate), which is full of interesting winemakers. It is a unique place on Earth, with a rich geology and history. I would encourage everyone to visit this special part of the world.

*Christian Holthausen has written for* Decanter, The Guardian, Meininger's Wine Business International *and* The World of Fine Wine.

Event: Burgundy Tasting in Support of the Gérard Basset Foundation
New York
6 May at 6pm
Enquiries: Amayès Aouli
+33 1 47 27 85 16
amayes.aouli@bonhams.com

# 19th Century and British Impressionist Art

London
Wednesday 20 March
2pm

James Jacques Joseph Tissot (French, 1836-1902)
*Un déjeuner* (detail)
signed 'J.Tissot' (lower right)
oil on canvas
*78.1 x 58.8cm (30¾ x 23in)*
Estimate: £200,000 - 300,000
($250,000 - 380,000)

Enquiries: Peter Rees
+44 (0) 20 7468 8201
peter.rees@bonhams.com

# *Around the* Globe

*Sasha Thomas* highlights a selection of Bonhams' sales worldwide

## Los Angeles
### *A big hit*

Few people are as well-known outside the arena where they made their name than 'Babe' Ruth. A legend of Major League Baseball, George Herman Ruth (1895-1948) began his career as a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox, before playing as an outfielder with the New York Yankees. He set numerous records during his career, including most home runs in a season (60 in 1927) – a record that stood until 1961. He also scored the most career home runs (714), which was not surpassed until 1974. Considered by many to be the greatest baseball player of all time, Ruth's versatility and everyman demeanour made him an American cultural icon. As with many of the top sports stars, Ruth was the subject of collectable trading cards, the most desirable and valuable being his Rookie Cards – the earliest cards issued of an athlete, produced when they participate for the first time at the highest level of their sport. Now a rare 'Babe' Ruth 1916 Rookie Card comes to Bonhams' Sports sale. This card is part of the M101-4 and M101-5 sets, produced by *The Sporting News* and related publications. The blank backs of these cards were often stamped with the stores or sponsors distributing them – in this case, Gimbels department store. This card captures a key moment in the early career of a player who would go on to reshape his sport.

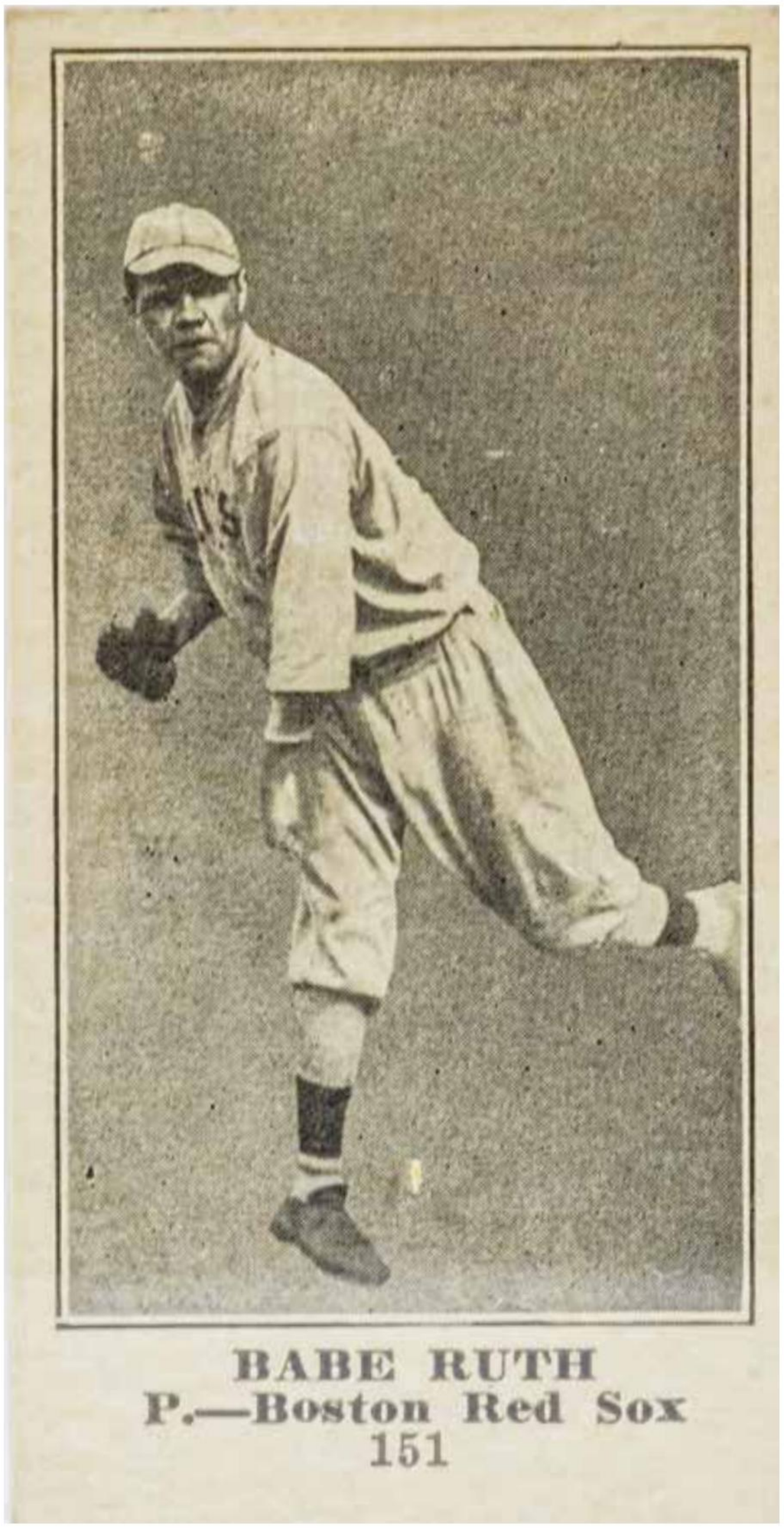
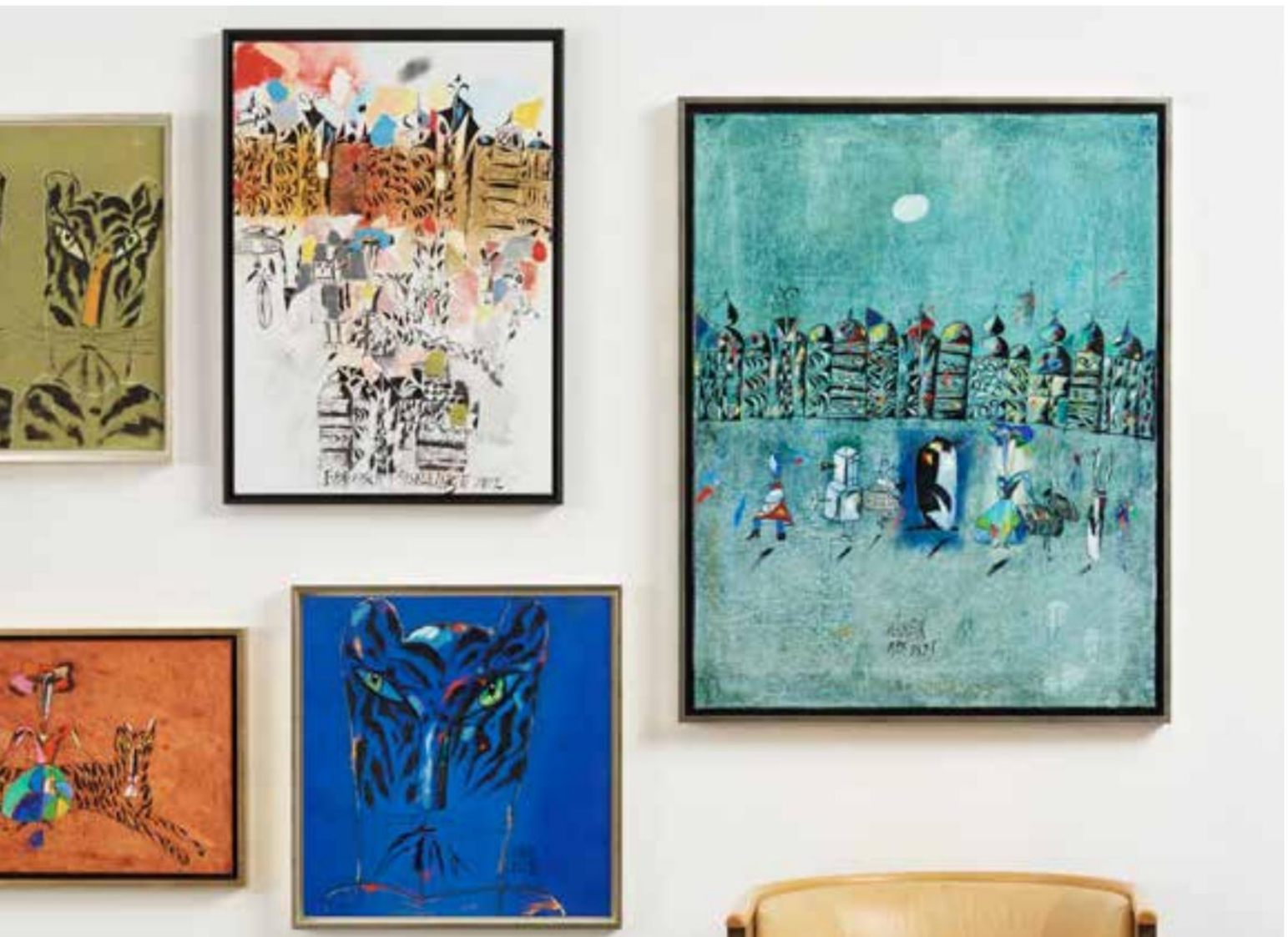



**Image:** Babe Ruth M101-4 1916 Rookie Card #151 PSA EX 5 with Gimbels ink stamp on the verso
**Estimate:** $250,000 - 500,000
**Sale:** Sports, 8-18 April
**Enquiries:** Joe Moe
+1 323 436 5436
joe.moe@bonhams.com



## Stockholm
### *Madeleine's memories*

Bukowskis is set to present an exhibition of one of Sweden's most-beloved artists, Madeleine Pyk, to celebrate her 90th birthday. *Don't Forget to Remember* will be the biggest display of Pyk's art ever staged, consisting of 117 never-before-seen works, many painted as recently as 2023. These works continue to develop motifs that will be familiar to fans of Pyk's art, such as her popular tigers, but the exhibition will also feature new approaches – including a robot that visits van Gogh's studio through AI.

**Sale:** *Don't Forget to Remember*, until 6 March
**Enquiries:** Lena Rydén
+46 (0) 707 78 35 71
lena.ryden@bukowskis.com



## Switzerland
## *Stéphanie Schleining Deschanel*

Bonhams has appointed Stéphanie Schleining Deschanel as Director of Bonhams Switzerland. Based in Zurich, Stéphanie brings 25 years of experience in the international art market, having worked with the distinguished contemporary art gallery Daniel Varenne, and for both Phillips and Sotheby's. She shaped her career at Sotheby's over two decades, taking such key roles as senior business getter, Head of Fine Art Sales in Switzerland, and senior specialist in Swiss art and related areas. With experience in business development and in project and team management, as well as being an art advisor for private and corporate collectors in Europe and the United States, she has played a pivotal role in promoting Swiss art internationally and, as an auctioneer, had the privilege of selling masterpieces at auction that achieved record prices. Stéphanie speaks English, French, German and Italian. The appointment is an indication of Bonhams' continued growth in Europe and Switzerland.

**Enquiries:** Stéphanie Schleining Deschanel
stephanie.schleining@bonhams.com

## Copenhagen
## *Ladies first*

To mark International Women's Day this year, Bruun Rasmussen is holding a sale that highlights the often overlooked 19th century paintings by female artists. Leading Pioneering Women Artists in Denmark 1850-1950, is *A Young Woman in Thought* by the Swiss-born painter Bertha Wegmann (1846-1926). One of the first female artists based in Denmark to achieve international success within her own lifetime, she became a leading portrait painter of the era.

She trained as an artist in Munich and then Paris, where she was influenced by French Naturalism and Impressionism. In 1883, she received the Thorvaldsen Medal, and in 1892 the Medal of Merit in gold – one of the first women to receive the honour. The improvement of conditions for women artists was of crucial importance for Wegmann, and she became a member of the board of Tegne-og Kunstindustriskolen for Kvinder (Draftsmanship and Industrial Design School for Women), a position she held from 1887 to 1907. She was the first woman to be awarded a seat in the Danish Academy of Fine Arts' Plenary Assembly, and in 1887 was the first woman elected to the selection committee of Charlottenborg's Spring Exhibition. A pioneer indeed.

**Image:** Bertha Wegmann
*A Young Woman in Thought*, 1879



**Estimate:** DKK800,000 - 1,000,000
(€105,000 - 135,000)
**Sale:** Pioneering Women Artists in Denmark 1850-1950, 4 March
**Enquiries:** Julie Arendse Voss
+45 8818 1123
jav@bruun-rasmussen.dk



## Knightsbridge
## *Photos from the Underground*

Many people collect signed photographs of their heroes, but not many collectors can boast of owning an autographed image of one of greatest Russian writers of all time – especially when the writer died in 1881. Fyodor Dostoevsky, writer of *Notes from Underground* (1864), *Crime and Punishment* (1866), *The Idiot* (1869), and *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), was born when photography itself was in its infancy. Having lived a turbulent life, he died in 1881, at the age of 59. Only 16 inscribed photographs of Dostoevsky are known to exist – and only four of these are held outside institutional collections. One such photograph comes to Bonhams' Fine Books sale this March. The photograph was inscribed in December 1880, in the last few weeks of Dostoevsky's life – he died in late January the following year. The recipient and addressee was Jacob Faddeevich Sakhar, a law student at the University of St Petersburg who collected signed photographs of Russian cultural figures. On 16 December 1880, Sakhar visited Dostoevsky with fellow student E.S. Fedorov-Chzmichov, and both received a signed photograph. Fedorov-Chzmichov's photograph is now in the Dostoevsky Museum, St Petersburg. Some believe that photographs can capture the soul – in which case, what might this image reveal of a man who was so astute at capturing the human condition?

**Image:** Cabinet photograph of Dostoevsky, inscribed to Jacob Faddeevich Sakhar below image, 16 December 1880
**Estimate:** £30,000 - 50,000
**Sale:** Fine Books and Manuscripts, 20 March
**Enquiries:** Simon Roberts
+44 (0) 20 7393 3834
simon.roberts@bonhams.com

## Hong Kong
### *Playing to the gallery*

This May, Bonhams Hong Kong will offer 12 paintings by Le Pho and Vu Cao Dam, now seen as masters of modern Vietnamese art. These works formed part of the personal collection of James R. Borynack, a connoisseur of fine art and the visionary CEO of Findlay Galleries, founded in 1870 by Wally Findlay. Borynack joined the gallery in 1972, and acquired the company in 1998, before reuniting it with the David Findlay Jr Gallery in 2016. In 1963, Le Pho and Vu Cao Dam signed a near-exclusive contract with the Findlay Galleries, which gave them access to the American market. The gallery also encouraged the pair to use larger canvases, brighter colours and more modern compositions. Le Pho and Vu Cao Dam moved to Paris from Vietnam in the 1930s, becoming part of the École de Paris. Their paintings combined the delicacy and elegance of Vietnamese silk painting with the vibrant colours and expressive brushstrokes of French Impressionism, indicative of the mutual growth and sense of cultural exchange that partnership with the Findlay Galleries promoted. The works would be admired by connoisseurs from both the West and the East.



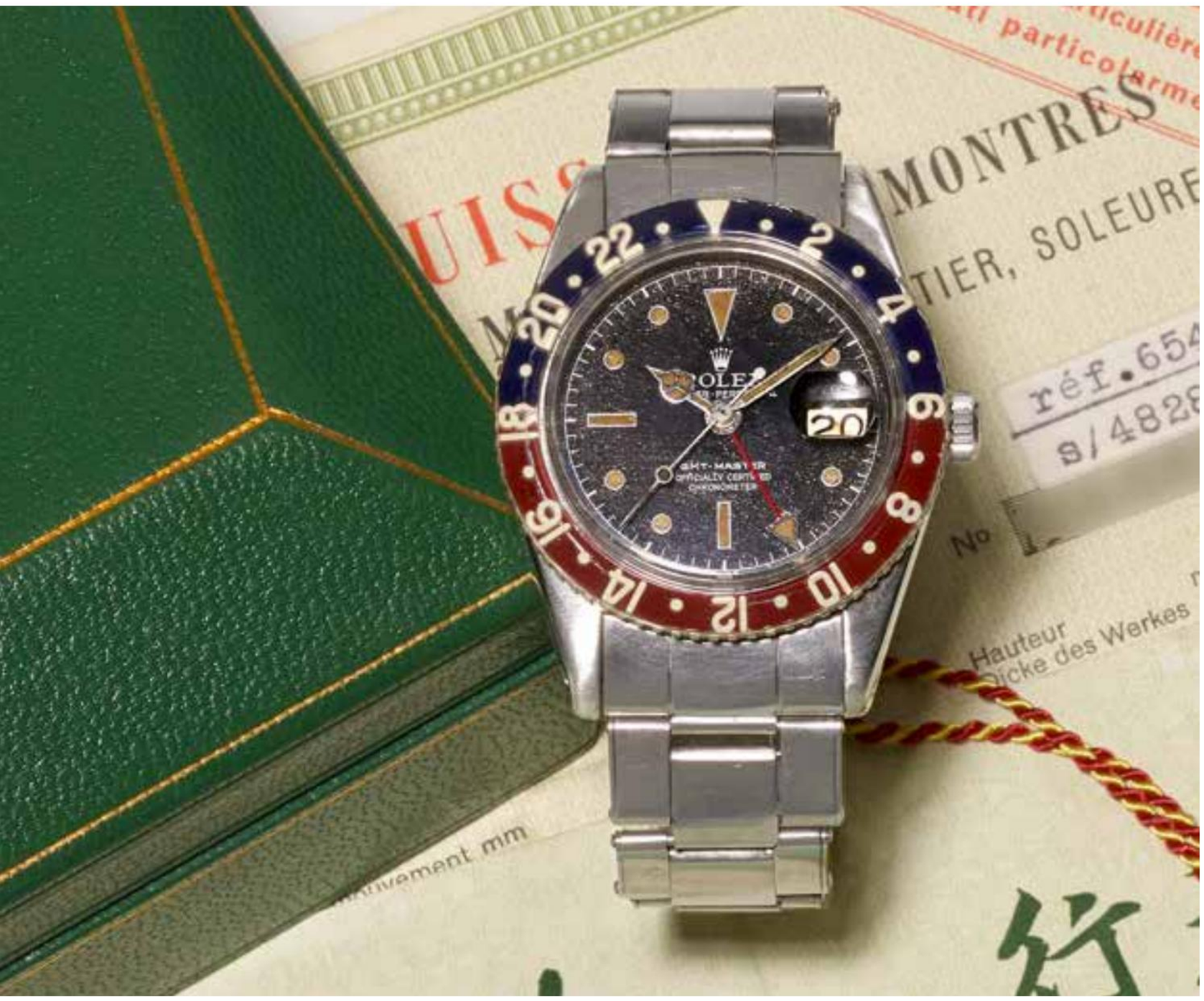
**Image:** Le Pho, *Le repos*, 1977 (detail)
**Estimate:** HKD800,000 - 1,200,000
**Sale:** Legends of Vietnamese Art from Findlay to Borynack, 25 May
**Enquiries:** Joan Yip, +33 1 89 53 43 57
joan.yip@bonhams.com



## Rhode Island
### *Gilded gears*

The Isotta Fraschini was to Italy what the Rolls-Royce is to Britain, with both companies claiming to make the world's best motor cars. Founded in Milan in 1898 by Cesare Isotta and Vincenzo Fraschini, Isotta Fraschini exhibited its first motor car, a single-cylinder, 5hp voiturette, at the 1901 Milan Expo. A twin-cylinder model followed in 1902, then a range of four-cylinder vehicles. Designer Giustino Cattaneo arrived in 1905, introducing nine new models in three years. Production expanded: by 1906, Isotta Fraschini was second only to FIAT among Italian manufacturers. In 1911, Isotta Fraschini was the first manufacturer to produce a commercially viable front-wheel braking system, and the company justifiably claimed that its post-WWI masterpiece – the Tipo 8 – was 'The Aristocrat of Automobiles'. It became the motor car of choice for Valentino, original 'It Girl' Clara Bow and William Randolph Hearst. This April, Bonhams will offer one of the Tipo 8's illustrious predecessors: the Tipo PM. One of only three believed to have survived, the Tipo PM outlived the Gilded Age without losing an ounce of style.

**Image:** 1912 Isotta Fraschini Tipo PM Roadster
**Estimate:** $500,000 - 600,000
**Sale:** Gilded Age, Rhode Island, 27 April
**Enquiries:** Rupert Banner +1 212 461 6515
rupert.banner@bonhamscars.com




## New York
## *Time flies*

The Rolex GMT-Master Ref: 6542 was originally commissioned by Pan Am in the 1950s to help their pilots track multiple time zones. It is no wonder, then, that the Rolex GMT soon became the favoured watch among business travellers in general. The original Ref: 6542 is the most collectable of the Rolex GMT models. It was fitted with a two-tone Bakelite bezel that featured radium-coated numerals, the delicate nature of which meant that many were replaced during their lifetime, leaving those in original condition very rare. The short production period of this particular reference number increases its rarity, having been manufactured only from 1954 until 1959. This Rolex GMT-Master found further fame some five years after Rolex finished production: this time on the wrist of Honor Blackman's character Pussy Galore in the James Bond movie *Goldfinger* (1964). A true piece of Rolex history, an example comes to Bonhams' Watches sale this April.

**Image:** Rolex: A Fine and Rare Stainless Steel Automatic Calendar Bracelet Watch GMT, Ref: 6542
**Estimate:** $50,000 - 80,000
**Sale:** Watches, 17 April
**Enquiries:** Nate Borgelt
+1 323 436 5406
nate.borgelt@bonhams.com

## Paris
## *Table talk*

Porcelain figures and groups were an essential part of table culture at European courts in the 18th century. The hard-paste porcelain of Meissen came to replace sugar sculpture at banquets, as the material was finer and more durable, and could be painted and gilded. The elaborate table sculptures of the period were an expression of the beauty and grandeur of the court, but also provided an amusing and sophisticated tableau to stimulate conversation among the diners, as well as serving as a diversion from sometimes-rigid court etiquette. In 1731, the sculptor Johann Joachim Kaendler – a student of the Dresden court sculptor Benjamin Thomae – was appointed as a modeller at the Meissen factory. Kaendler's skill was equal to the extraordinary ambition of the Meissen factory: to represent the whole world in porcelain. Over 40 years, he depicted members of the court; actors from the Commedia dell'Arte; musicians; tradesmen; allegorical figures; street criers; all the nationalities of the world from Europe and the Balkans to Turkey, Asia and Africa; pastoral figures, villagers, and even beggars. His figures and groups are masterpieces of late-Baroque and Rococo sculpture. An extraordinary collection of Meissen, formed in the 1980s and 1990s by a German private collector, comes to Bonhams this spring. So you now have a chance to update your dinner table in a way that's sure to stimulate conversation.

**Image:** Freimaurergruppe, Meissen, circa 1745.
**Estimate:** €40,000 - 60,000
**Sale:** The Merkle Collection of Important Meissen Porcelain: Part I, 17 April
**Enquiries:** Nette Megens
+44 (0) 20 7468 8348
nette.megens@bonhams.com



# Impressionist & Modern Art
London
Thursday 18 April
4pm

Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978)
*Ponte di Rialto* (detail)
signed 'G. de Chirico' (centre)
oil on canvas
*50.5 x 60cm (19 x 23in)*
painted in 1956
Estimate: £130,000 - 180,000
($160,000 - 230,000)

Enquiries: Frederick Millar
+44 (0) 20 7468 8251
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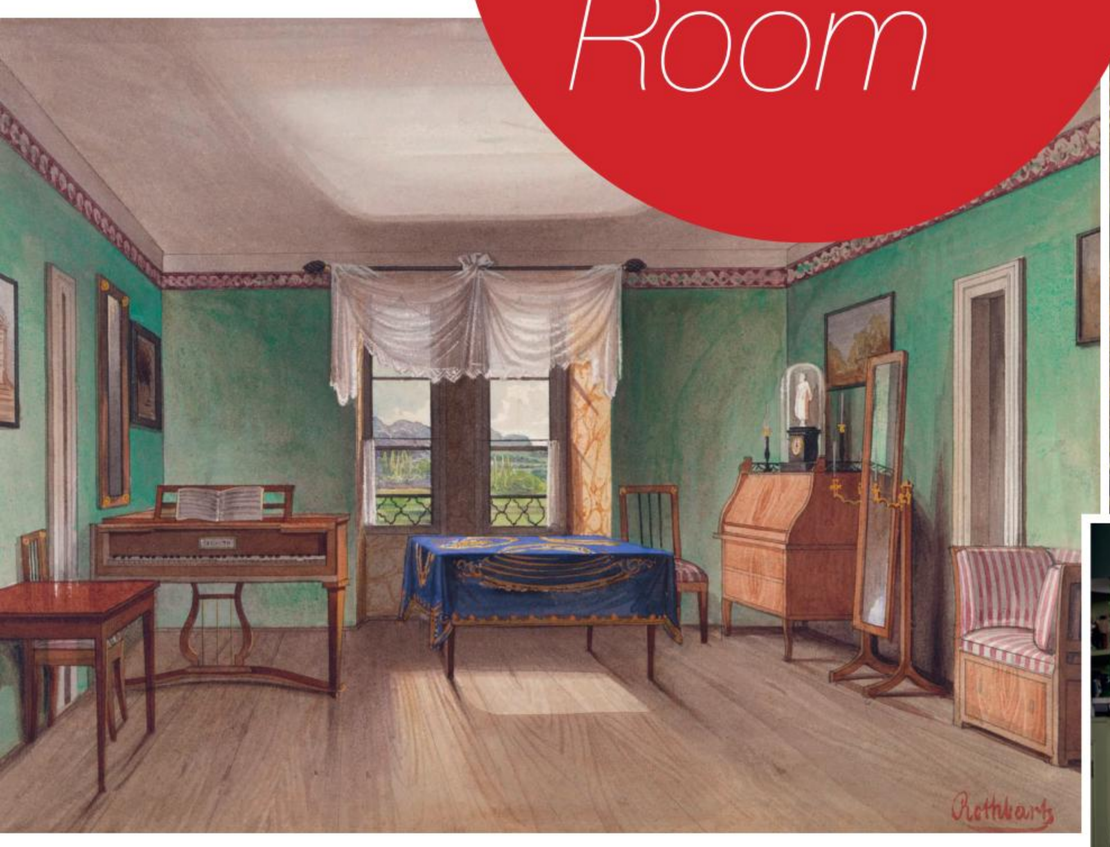
For information and details of sale dates, or about the objects and paintings pictured, please contact Customer Services at Bonhams New Bond Street on +44 (0) 20 7447 7447.

# Scottish Art
Edinburgh
Wednesday 15 May
2pm

Eric Harold Macbeth Robertson (British, 1887-1941)
*'Nude Girl'* (detail)
oil on canvas
*102 x 152.5cm (40 x 60in)*
painted in 1921
Estimate: £30,000 - 50,000
($40,000 - 60,000)

Enquiries: May Matthews
+44 (0) 131 240 2297
may.matthews@bonhams.com

# My Favourite Room







© Watercolour far left: Royal Collection Trust/His Majesty King Charles III 2023

Antonio Zazueta Olmos

**Far left**
Prince Albert's Prinzenzimmer

**Left**
A.N. Wilson, Prince Albert's number 1 fan

**Above**
Schloss Rosenau, "looking almost as if it were made out of yellow marzipan"

## Prince Albert's childhood room was spare, calm and cool. ***A.N.Wilson*** adores it

Looking almost as if it were made out of yellow marzipan, the Schloss Rosenau, about four miles from Coburg in Thuringia, was the childhood home of Prince Albert and his elder brother Ernst. It is not surprising that Albert became one of the greatest aesthetes ever to occupy a position in British public life, since he grew up surrounded by beauty, and the so-called Prinzenzimmer is the best room in that perfect house.

The walls are a delicate green, something between *eau-de-nil* and the first leaves of lime-trees in springtime. They are surmounted by a dado of floral design. There are bare boards on the floor. An early fortepiano is evidence of the intense musicality of both brothers. Albert composed *Lieder*, and a memorable setting of the *Te Deum*, but he was simply a very good amateur. Ernst, by contrast, was a real composer, with five operas to his name – some of them (think Weber, but they are also as good as Weber) are still performed. There is a small sofa, a few upright chairs in the Biedermeier taste, a refined, simplified version of French Empire. When Albert first had the opportunity to build and design a house of his own – Osborne, on the Isle of Wight – he created an Italianate seaside *palazzo*. What he had learnt in the Rosenau, however, was the importance of space, and the Prinzenzimmer achieves its effect by what is not there, as much as by what is. There are no rugs. There are no 'knick-knacks'. The pictures on the walls are few – simple architectural views. There is a single clock, and there are two candlesticks. There is no Victorian clutter. In her widowhood at Osborne, Victoria managed to fill Albert's carefully made empty spaces with framed photographs, casts of her children's limbs, clocks, pen-wipers, embroidered stools and cushions, chairs, tables, pictures of favourite pets, and with the pets themselves and their dog-baskets. There was none of that in Albert's childhood home. The window of the Prinzenzimmer looks from the green room to the green fields and trees and hills of Thuringia, where the boys loved to hunt, to walk, and to collect specimens for their Natural History Museum.

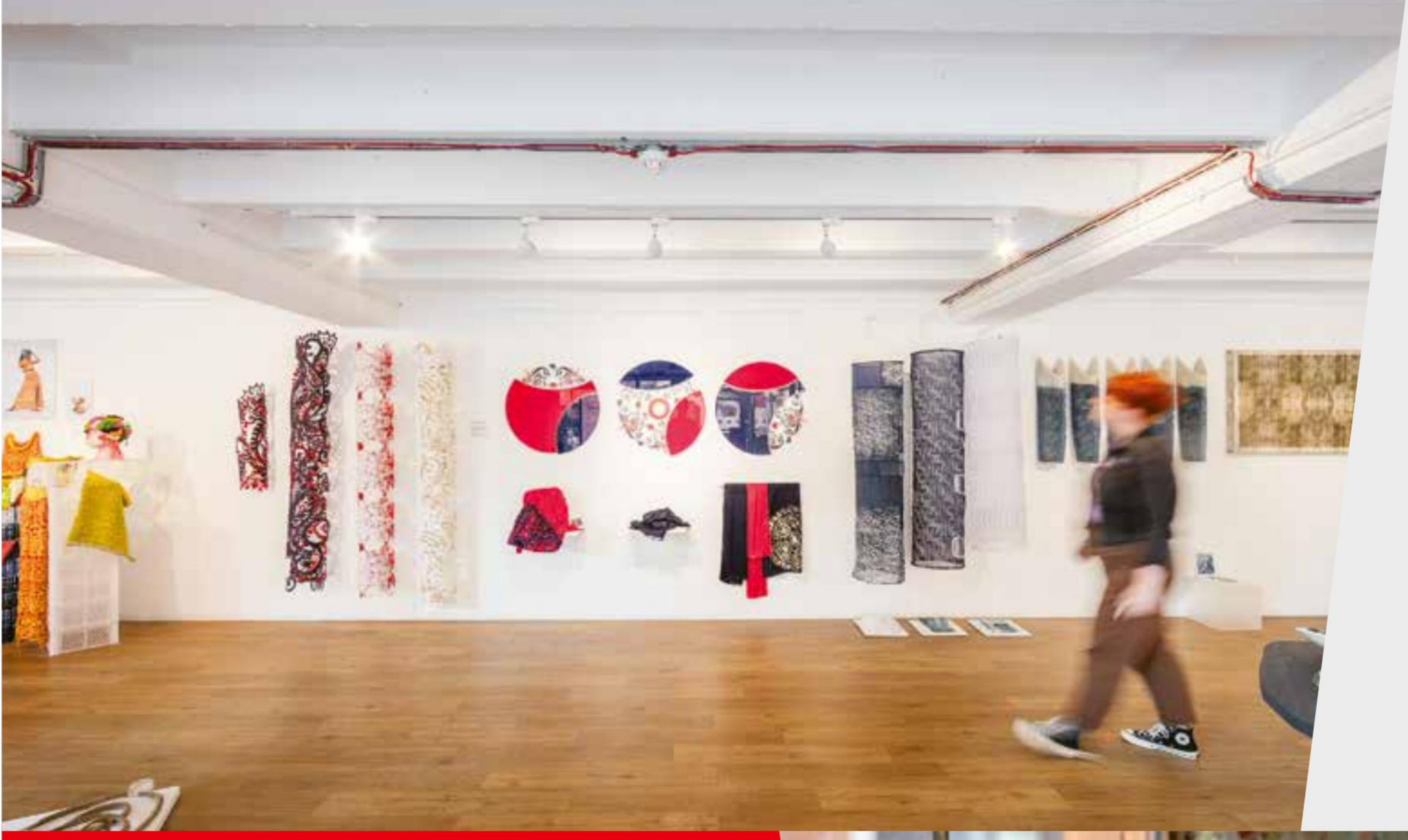
The rooms themselves, however, are spare and cool. They are places in which the calm mind can absorb learning, and it was here, under the care of their tutor Christoph Florschütz, that they both became the Renaissance men they were – and with the capacity to do what would have been totally beyond the powers of the British Royal princes of the day – attend university.

> "The Prinzenzimmer achieves its effect by what is not there, as much as by what is"

Knowing how intensely he missed Germany, Queen Victoria commissioned watercolours of all the rooms in the Rosenau, which are preserved in the Royal Collection at Windsor. At the Rosenau itself, the visitor today can see the rooms just as they were when the childhood of the princes came to an end.

*A.N. Wilson is author of* Prince Albert: The Man Who Saved the Monarchy (2019).

*Schloss Rosenau, Coburg; schloesser-coburg.de*



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Uri, Switzerland
28.5 cm tall x 12.7 cm wide

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